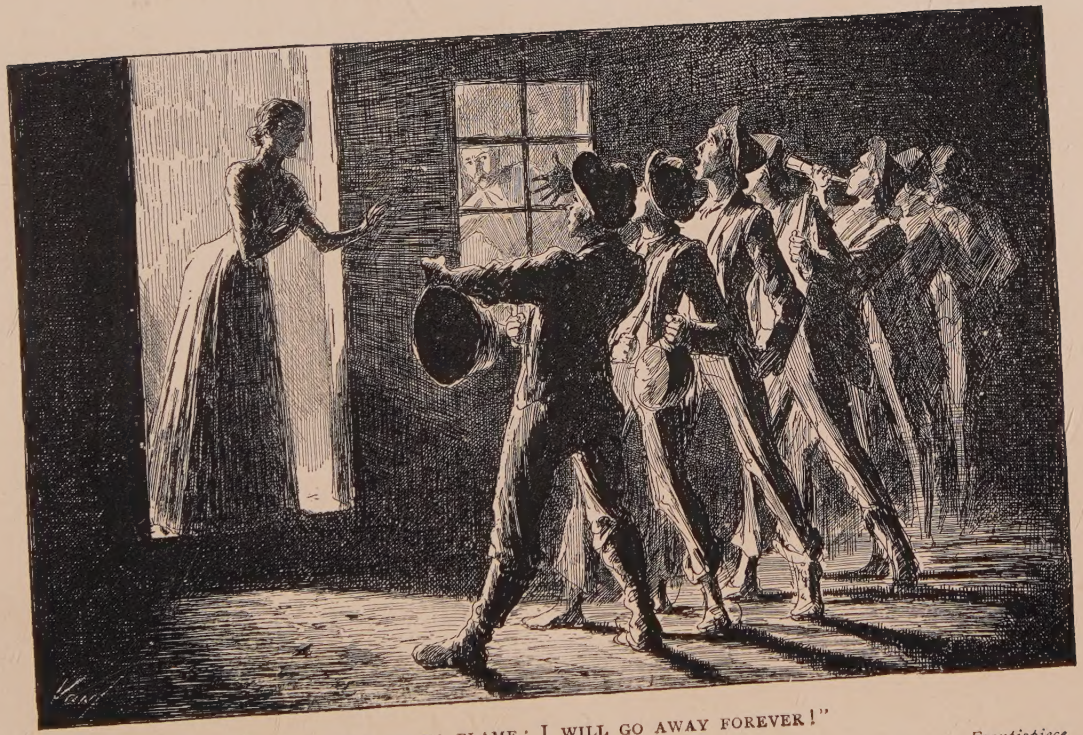
Mrs. C. Crump
401 Johnson St
Peoria.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/bwb_P9-CSD-250



"I ONLY AM TO BLAME; I WILL GO AWAY FOREVER!" *Frontispiece.*

Fell in Love.

The Works of E. P. Roe

VOLUME EIGHTEEN

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS WIFE

E. P. ROE

REMINISCENCES OF HIS LIFE

BY HIS SISTER, MARY A. ROE

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
P. F. COLLIER & SON
MCMII

Copyright, 1886,
By DODD, MEAD, & COMPANY.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	Left alone	9
II.	A Very Interested Friend	18
III.	Mrs. Mumpson negotiates and yields	28
IV.	Domestic Bliss	38
V.	Mrs. Mumpson takes up her Burdens	45
VI.	A Marriage?	54
VII.	From Home to the Street	62
VIII.	Holcroft's View of Matrimony	67
IX.	Mrs. Mumpson accepts her Mission	75
X.	A Night of Terror	85
XI.	Baffled	92
XII.	Jane	103
XIII.	Not Wife, but Waif	113
XIV.	A Pitched Battle	120
XV.	"What is to become of me?"	127
XVI.	Mrs. Mumpson's Vicissitudes	135
XVII.	A Momentous Decision	147
XVIII.	Holcroft gives his Hand	156
XIX.	A Business Marriage	166
XX.	Uncle Jonathan's Impression of the Bride	175
XXI.	At Home	182
XXII.	Getting acquainted	190

XXIII. Between the Past and Future . . . 200
XXIV. Given her Own Way 212
XXV. A Charivari 223
XXVI. "You don't know" 235
XXVII. Farm and Farmer bewitched 246
XXVIII. Another Waif 257
XXIX. Husband and Wife in Trouble . . . 269
XXX. Holcroft's Best Hope 280
XXXI. "Never!" 291
XXXII. Jane plays Mouse to the Lion . . . 301
XXXIII. "Shrink from You?" 310

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS WIFE

"I only am to blame, I will go away forever" . . . . . FRONTISPIECE
"Here's a strong hand that's able to take care of you" . . . . . .

REMINISCENCES

E. P. Roe at the time of his death . . . . . FRONTISPIECE
E. P. Roe as a Student . . . . . .
E. P. Roe as Chaplain, age 26 . . . . . .
View from the piazza at "Roelands" . . . . . .
The Study at "Roelands" . . . . . .
Tablet on Bowlder in "Roe Park" . . . . . .

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS WIFE

HE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS WIFE

CHAPTER I

LEFT ALONE

THE dreary March evening is rapidly passing from murky gloom to obscurity. Gusts of icy rain and sleet are sweeping full against a man who, though driving, bows his head so low that he cannot see his horses. The patient beasts, however, plod along the miry road, unerringly taking their course to the distant stable door. The highway sometimes passes through a grove on the edge of a forest, and the trees creak and groan as they writhe in the heavy blasts. In occasional groups of pines there is sighing and moaning almost human in suggestiveness of trouble. Never had Nature been in a more dismal mood, never had she been more prodigal of every element of discomfort, and never had the hero of my story been more cast down in heart and hope than on this chaotic day which, even to his dull fancy, appeared closing in harmony with his feelings and fortune. He is going home, yet the thought brings no assurance of welcome and comfort. As he cowers upon the seat of his market wagon, he is to the reader what he is in the fading light—a mere dim outline of a man. His progress is so slow that there will be plenty of time to relate some facts about him which will make the scenes and events to follow more intelligible.

James Holcroft is a middle-aged man and the owner of a small, hilly farm. He had inherited his rugged acres from his father, had always lived upon them, and the feeling

had grown strong with the lapse of time that he could live nowhere else. Yet he knew that he was, in the vernacular of the region, "going down hill." The small savings of years were slowing melting away, and the depressing feature of this truth was that he did not see how he could help himself. He was not a sanguine man, but rather one endowed with a hard, practical sense which made it clear that the down-hill process had only to continue sufficiently long to leave him landless and penniless. It was all so distinct on this dismal evening that he groaned aloud.

"If it comes to that, I don't know what I'll do—crawl away on a night like this and give up, like enough."

Perhaps he was right. When a man with a nature like his "gives up," the end has come. The low, sturdy oaks that grew so abundantly along the road were types of his character—they could break, but not bend. He had little suppleness, little power to adapt himself to varied conditions of life. An event had occurred a year since, which, for months, he could only contemplate with dull wonder and dismay. In his youth he had married the daughter of a small farmer. Like himself, she had always been accustomed to toil and frugal living. From childhood she had been impressed with the thought that parting with a dollar was a serious matter, and to save a dollar one of the good deeds rewarded in this life and the life to come. She and her husband were in complete harmony on this vital point. Yet not a miserly trait entered into their humble thrift. It was a necessity entailed by their meagre resources; it was inspired by the wish for an honest independence in their old age.

There was to be no old age for her. She took a heavy cold, and almost before her husband was aware of her danger, she had left his side. He was more than grief-stricken, he was appalled. No children had blessed their union, and they had become more and more to each other in their simple home life. To many it would have seemed a narrow and even a sordid life. It could not have been the latter,

for all their hard work, their petty economies and plans to increase the hoard in the savings bank were robbed of sordidness by an honest, quiet affection for each other, by mutual sympathy and a common purpose. It undoubtedly was a meagre life which grew narrower with time and habit. There had never been much romance to begin with, but something that often wears better—mutual respect and affection. From the first, James Holcroft had entertained the sensible hope that she was just the girl to help him make a living from his hillside farm, and he had not hoped for or even thought of very much else except the harmony and good comradeship which bless people who are suited to each other. He had been disappointed in no respect; they had toiled and gathered like ants; they were confidential partners in the homely business and details of the farm; nothing was wasted, not even time. The little farmhouse abounded in comfort, and was a model of neatness and order. If it and its surroundings were devoid of grace and ornament, they were not missed, for neither of its occupants had ever been accustomed to such things. The years which passed so uneventfully only cemented the union and increased the sense of mutual dependence. They would have been regarded as exceedingly matter-of-fact and undemonstrative, but they were kind to each other and understood each other. Feeling that they were slowly yet surely getting ahead, they looked forward to an old age of rest, and a sufficiency for their simple needs. Then, before he could realize the truth, he was left alone at her wintry grave; neighbors dispersed after the brief service, and he plodded back to his desolate home. There was no relative to step in and partially make good his loss. Some of the nearest residents sent a few cooked provisions until he could get help, but these attentions soon ceased. It was believed that he was abundantly able to take care of himself, and he was left to do so. He was not exactly unpopular, but had been much too reticent and had lived too secluded a life to find, uninvited, sympathy now. He was the last man, however, to ask for sympathy or help;

and this was not due to misanthropy, but simply to temperament and habits of life. He and his wife had been sufficient for each other, and the outside world was excluded chiefly because they had no time or taste for social interchanges. As a result, he suffered serious disadvantages; he was misunderstood and virtually left to meet his calamity alone.

But, indeed, he could scarcely have met it in any other way. Even to his wife, he had never formed the habit of speaking freely of his thoughts and feelings. There had been no need, so complete was the understanding between them. A hint, a sentence, revealed to each other their simple and unlimited processes of thought. To talk about her now to strangers was impossible. He had no language by which to express the heavy, paralyzing pain in his heart.

For a time he performed necessary duties in a dazed, mechanical way. The horses and live stock were fed regularly, the cows milked; but the milk stood in the dairy room until it spoiled. Then he would sit down at his desolate hearth and gaze for hours into the fire, until it sunk down and died out. Perhaps no class in the world suffer from such a terrible sense of loneliness as simple-natured, country people, to whom a very few have been all the company they required.

At last Holcroft partially shook off his stupor, and began the experiment of keeping house and maintaining his dairy with hired help. For a long year he had struggled on through all kinds of domestic vicissitude, conscious all the time that things were going from bad to worse. His house was isolated, the region sparsely settled, and good help difficult to be obtained under favoring auspices. The few respectable women in the neighborhood who occasionally "lent a hand" in other homes than their own would not compromise themselves, as they expressed it, by "keepin' house for a widower." Servants obtained from the neighboring town either could not endure the loneliness, or else were so wasteful and ignorant, that the farmer, in sheer desperation, discharged them. The silent, grief-stricken, rugged-featured

man was no company for any one. The year was but a record of changes, waste and small pilferings. Although he knew he could not afford it, he tried the device of obtaining two women instead of one, so that they might have society in each other; but either they would not stay or else he found that he had two thieves to deal with instead of one—brazen, incompetent creatures who knew more about whiskey than milk, and who made his home a terror to him.

Some asked, good-naturedly, "Why don't you marry again?" Not only was the very thought repugnant, but he knew well that he was not the man to thrive on any such errand to the neighboring farmhouses. Though apparently he had little sentiment in his nature, yet the memory of his wife was like his religion. He felt that he could not put an ordinary woman into his wife's place, and say to her the words he had spoken before. Such a marriage would be to him a grotesque farce, at which his soul revolted.

At last he was driven to the necessity of applying for help to an Irish family that had recently moved into the neighborhood. The promise was forbidding, indeed, as he entered the squalid abode in which were huddled men, women and children. A sister of the mistress of the shanty was voluble in her assurances of unlimited capability.

"Faix I kin do all the wourk, in doors and out, so I takes the notion," she had asserted.

There certainly was no lack of bone and muscle in the big, red-faced, middle-aged woman who was so ready to preside at his hearth and glean from his diminished dairy a modicum of profit; but as he trudged home along the wintry road, he experienced strong feelings of disgust at the thought of such a creature sitting by the kitchen fire in the place once occupied by his wife.

During all these domestic vicissitudes he had occupied the parlor, a stiff, formal, frigid apartment, which had been rarely used in his married life. He had no inclination for the society of his help; in fact, there had been none with whom he could associate. The better class of those who went

out to service could find places much more to their taste than the lonely farmhouse. The kitchen had been the one cosey, cheerful room of the house, and, driven from it, the farmer was an exile in his own home. In the parlor, he could at least brood over the happy past, and that was about all the solace he had left.

Bridget came and took possession of her domain with a sang froid which appalled Holcroft from the first. To his directions and suggestions, she curtly informed him that she knew her business and "didn't want no mon around, orderin' and interferin'."

In fact, she did appear, as she had said, capable of any amount of work, and usually was in a mood to perform it; but soon her male relatives began to drop in to smoke a pipe with her in the evening. A little later on, the supper-table was left standing for those who were always ready to "take a bite." The farmer had never heard of the camel who first got his head into the tent, but it gradually dawned upon him that he was half supporting the whole Irish tribe down at the shanty. Every evening, while he shivered in his best room, he was compelled to hear the coarse jests and laughter in the adjacent apartment. One night his bitter thoughts found expression: "I might as well open a free house for the keeping of man and beast."

He had endured this state of affairs for some time simply because the woman did the essential work in her off-hand, slap-dash style, and left him unmolested to his brooding as long as he did not interfere with her ideas of domestic economy. But his impatience and the sense of being wronged were producing a feeling akin to desperation. Every week there was less and less to sell from the dairy; chickens and eggs disappeared, and the appetites of those who dropped in to "kape Bridgy from bein' a bit lonely" grew more voracious.

Thus matters had drifted on until this March day when he had taken two calves to market. He had said to the kitchen potentate that he would take supper with a friend in

town and therefore would not be back before nine in the evening. This friend was the official keeper of the poor-house and had been a crony of Holcroft's in early life. He had taken to politics instead of farming, and now had attained to what he and his acquaintances spoke of as a "snug berth." Holcroft had maintained with this man a friendship based partly on business relations, and the well-to-do purveyor for paupers always gave his old playmate an honest welcome to his private supper table, which differed somewhat from that spread for the town's pensioners.

On this occasion the gathering storm had decided Holcroft to return without availing himself of his friend's hospitality, and he is at last entering the lane leading from the highway to his dooryard. Even as he approaches his dwelling he hears the sound of revelry and readily guesses what is taking place.

Quiet, patient men, when goaded beyond a certain point, are capable of terrible ebullitions of anger, and Holcroft was no exception. It seemed to him that night that the God he had worshipped all his life was in league with man against him. The blood rushed to his face, his chilled form became rigid with a sudden, passionate protest against his misfortunes and wrongs. Springing from the wagon, he left his team standing at the barn door and rushed to the kitchen window. There before him sat the whole tribe from the shanty, feasting at his expense. The table was loaded with coarse profusion. Roast fowls alternated with fried ham and eggs, a great pitcher of milk was flanked by one of foaming cider, while the post of honor was occupied by the one contribution of his self-invited guests—a villanous looking jug.

They had just sat down to the repast when the weazen-faced patriarch of the tribe remarked, by way of grace, it may be supposed, "Be jabers, but isn't ould Holcroft givin' us a foine spread the noight! Here's bad luck to the glowerin' ould skin-flint," and he poured out a bumper from the jug.

The farmer waited to see and hear no more. Hastening to a parlor window, he raised it quietly and clambered in: then taking his rusty shot gun, which he kept loaded for the benefit of the vermin that prowled about his hen-roost, he burst in upon the startled group.

"Be off!" he shouted. "If you value your lives, get out of that door, and never show your faces on my place again. I'll not be eaten out of house and home by a lot of jackals."

His weapon, his dark, gleaming eyes and desperate aspect, taught the men that he was not to be trifled with a moment, and they slunk away.

Bridget began to whine. "Yez wouldn't turn a woman out in the noight and storm—"

"You are not a woman!" thundered Holcroft, "you are a jackal too! Get your traps and begone! I warn the whole lot of you to beware! I give you this chance to get off the premises, and then I shall watch for you all, old and young!"

There was something terrible and flame-like in his anger, dismaying the cormorants, and they hastened away with such alacrity that Bridget went down the lane screaming, "Sthop, I tell yees, and be afther waitin' for me."

Holcroft hurled the jug after them with words that sounded like an imprecation. He next turned to the viands on the table with an expression of loathing, gathered them up and carried them to the hog-pen. He seemed possessed by a feverish impatience to banish every vestige of those whom he had driven forth, and to restore the apartment as nearly as possible to the aspect it had worn in former happy years. At last, he sat down where his wife had been accustomed to sit, unbuttoned his waist-coat and flannel shirt and from against his naked breast took an old, worn daguerreotype. He looked a moment at the plain, good face reflected there, then, bowing his head upon it, strong, convulsive sobs shook his frame, though not a tear moistened his eyes.

How long the paroxysm would have lasted it were hard

to say, had not the impatient whinnying of his horses, still exposed to the storm, caught his attention. The life-long habit of caring for the dumb animals in his charge asserted itself. He went out mechanically, unharnessed and stabled them as carefully as ever before in his life, then returned and wearily prepared himself a pot of coffee, which, with a crust of bread, was all the supper he appeared to crave.

CHAPTER II

A VERY INTERESTED FRIEND

FOR the next few days, Holcroft lived alone. The weather remained inclement and there was no occasion for him to go farther away than the barn and out-buildings. He felt that a crisis in his life was approaching, that he would probably be compelled to sell his property for what it would bring, and begin life again under different auspices.

"I must either sell or marry," he groaned, "and one's about as hard and bad as the other. Who'll buy the place and stock at half what they're worth, and where could I find a woman that would look at an old fellow like me, even if I could bring myself to look at her?"

The poor man did indeed feel that he was shut up to dreadful alternatives. With his ignorance of the world, and dislike for contact with strangers, selling out and going away was virtually starting out on an unknown sea without rudder or compass. It was worse than that—it was the tearing up of a life that had rooted itself in the soil whereon he had been content from childhood to middle age. He would suffer more in going, and in the memory of what he had parted with, than in any of the vicissitudes which might overtake him. He had not much range of imagination or feeling, but within his limitations his emotions were strong and his convictions unwavering. Still, he thought it might be possible to live in some vague, unknown place, doing some kind of work for people with whom he need not have very much to do. "I've always been my own master, and done things in my own way," he muttered, "but I suppose

I could farm it to suit some old, quiet people, if I could only find 'em. One thing is certain, anyhow—I couldn't stay here in Oakville, and see another man living in these rooms, and plowing my fields, and driving his cows to my old pasture lots. That would finish me like a galloping consumption."

Every day he shrunk with a strange dread from the wrench of parting with the familiar place and with all that he associated with his wife. This was really the ordeal which shook his soul, and not the fear that he would be unable to earn his bread elsewhere. The unstable multitude who are forever fancying that they would be better off somewhere else or at something else can have no comprehension of this deep-rooted love of locality and the binding power of long association. They regard such men as Holcroft as little better than plodding oxen. The highest tribute which some people can pay to a man, however, is to show that they do not and can not understand him. But the farmer was quite indifferent whether he was understood or not. He gave no thought to what people said or might say. What were people to him? He only had a hunted, pathetic sense of being hedged in and driven to bay. Even to his neighbors, there was more of the humorous than the tragic in his plight. It was supposed that he had a goodly sum in the bank, and gossips said that he and his wife thought more of increasing this hoard than of each other, and that old Holcroft's mourning was chiefly for a business partner. His domestic tribulations evoked mirth rather than sympathy; and as the news spread from farmhouse to cottage, of his summary bundling of Bridget and her satellites out of doors, there were both hilarity and satisfaction.

While there was little commiseration for the farmer, there was decided disapprobation of the dishonest Irish tribe, and all were glad that the gang had received a lesson which might restrain them from preying upon others.

Holcroft was partly to blame for his present isolation. Remote rural populations are given to strong prejudices,

especially against those who are thought to be well-off from an over-saving spirit, and who, worse still, are unsocial. Almost any thing will be forgiven sooner than "thinking one's self better than other folks;" and that is the usual interpretation of shy, reticent people. But there had been a decided tinge of selfishness in the Holcrofts' habit of seclusion; for it became a habit rather than a principle. While they cherished no active dislike to their neighbors, or sense of superiority, these were not wholly astray in believing that they had little place in the thoughts or interests of the occupants of the hill farm. Indifference begat indifference, and now the lonely, helpless man had neither the power nor the disposition to bridge the chasm which separated him from those who might have given him kindly and intelligent aid. He was making a pathetic effort to keep his home and to prevent his heart from being torn bleeding away from all it loved. His neighbors thought that he was merely exerting himself to keep the dollars which it had been the supreme motive of his life to accumulate.

Giving no thought to the opinions of others, Holcroft only knew that he was in sore straits—that all which made his existence a blessing was at stake.

At times, during these lonely and stormy March days, he would dismiss his anxious speculations in regard to his future course. He was so morbid, especially at night, that he felt that his wife could revisit the quiet house. He cherished the hope that she could see him and hear what he said, and he spoke in her viewless presence with a freedom and fulness that was unlike his old reticence and habit of repression. He wondered that he had not said more endearing words and given her stronger assurance of how much she was to him. Late at night, he would start out of a long revery, take a candle, and, going through the house, would touch what she had touched, and look long and fixedly at things associated with her. Her gowns still hung in the closet, just as she had left them; he would take them out and recall the well-remembered scenes and occasions when

they were worn. At such times, she almost seemed beside him, and he had a consciousness of companionship which soothed his perturbed spirit. He felt that she appreciated such loving remembrance although unable to express her approval. He did not know it, but his nature was being softened, deepened and enriched by these deep and unwonted experiences ; the hard materiality of his life was passing away, rendering him capable of something better than he had ever known.

In the morning, all the old prosaic problems of his life would return, with their hard, practical insistence, and he knew that he must decide upon something very soon. His lonely vigils and days of quiet had brought him to the conclusion that he could not hunt up a wife as a matter of business. He would rather face the "ever angry bears" than breathe the subject of matrimony to any woman that he could ever imagine himself marrying. He was therefore steadily drifting toward the necessity of selling everything and going away. This event, however, was like a coral-reef to a sailor, with no land in view beyond it. The only thing which seemed certain was the general breaking up of all that had hitherto made his life.

The offer of help came from an unexpected source. One morning, Holcroft received a call from a neighbor who had never before shown any interest in his affairs. On this occasion, however, Mr. Weeks began to display so much solicitude that the farmer was not only surprised, but also a little distrustful. Nothing in his previous knowledge of the man had prepared the way for such very kindly intervention.

After some general references to the past, Mr. Weeks continued, "I've been saying to our folks that it was too bad to let you worry on alone without more neighborly help. You ought either to get married or have some thoroughly respectable and well-known middle-aged woman keep house for you. That would stop all talk, and there's been a heap of it, I can tell you. Of course, I and my folks don't believe anything's been wrong."

"Believing that something was wrong, is about all the attention my neighbors have given me, as far as I can see," Holcroft remarked, bitterly.

"Well, you see, Holcroft, you've kept yourself so inside your shell that people don't know what to believe. Now, the thing to do is to change all that. I know how hard it is for a man, placed as you be, to get decent help. My wife was a wondering about it the other day, and I shut her up mighty sudden by saying, 'You're a good manager, and know all the country side, yet how often you're a complaining that you can't get a girl that's worth her salt to help in haying and other busy times when we have to board a lot of men.' Well, I won't beat around the bush any more. I've come to act the part of a good neighbor. There's no use of you're trying to get along with such hap-hazard help as you can pick up here and in town. You want a respectable woman for housekeeper, and then have a cheap, common sort of girl to work under her. Now, I know of just such a woman, and it's not unlikely she'd be persuaded to take entire charge of your house and dairy. My wife's cousin, Mrs Mumpson" —at the mention of this name, Holcroft gave a slight start, feeling something like a cold chill run down his back.

Mr. Weeks was a little disconcerted, but resumed, "I believe she called on your wife once?"

"Yes," the farmer replied, laconically. "I was away and did not see her."

"Well, now," pursued Mr. Weeks, "she's a good soul. She has her little peculiarities; so have you and me, a lot of 'em; but she's thoroughly respectable, and there isn't a man or woman in the town that would think of saying a word against her. She has only one child, a nice, quiet little girl who'd be company for her mother and make everything look right, you know."

"I don't see what there's been to look wrong," growled the farmer.

"Nothing to me and my folks, of course, or I wouldn't suggest the idea of a relation of my wife coming to live with

you. But you see people will talk unless you stop their mouths so they'll feel like fools in doing it. I know yours has been a mighty awkward case, and here's a plain way out of it. You can set yourself right and have everything looked after as it ought to be, in twenty-four hours. We've talked to Cynthy—that's Mrs. Mumpson—and she takes a sight of interest. She'd do well by you and straighten things out, and you might do a plaguy sight worse than give her the right to take care of your indoor affairs for life."

"I don't expect to marry again," said Holcroft, curtly.

"Oh, well, many a man and woman has said that and believed it, too, at the time. I'm not saying that my wife's cousin is inclined that way herself. Like enough, she isn't at all, but then, the right kind of persuading does change women's minds sometimes, eh? Mrs. Mumpson is kinder alone in the world, like yourself, and if she was sure of a good home and a kind husband there's no telling what good luck might happen to you. But there'll be plenty of time for considering all that on both sides. You can't live like a hermit—"

"I was thinking of selling out and leaving these parts," Holcroft interrupted.

"Now look here, neighbor, you know as well as I do that in these times you couldn't give away the place. What's the use of such foolishness? The thing to do is to keep the farm and get a good living out of it. You've got down in the dumps and can't see what's sensible and to your own advantage."

Holcroft was thinking deeply, and he turned his eyes wistfully to the upland slopes of his farm. Mr. Weeks had talked plausibly, and if all had been as he represented, the plan would not have been a bad one. But the widower did not yearn for the widow. He did not know much about her, but had very unfavorable impressions. Mrs. Holcroft had not been given to speaking ill of any one, but she had always shaken her head with a peculiar significance when Mrs. Mumpson's name was mentioned. The widow had felt it

her duty to call and counsel against the sin of seclusion and being too much absorbed in the affairs of this world.

"You should take an interest in every one," this self-appointed evangelist had declared, and in one sense she lived up to her creed. She permitted no scrap of information about people to escape her, and was not only versed in all the gossip of Oakville, but also of several other localities in which she visited.

But Holcroft had little else to deter him from employing her services beyond an unfavorable impression. She could not be so bad as Bridget Malony, and he was almost willing to employ her again for the privilege of remaining on his paternal acres. As to marrying the widow—a slight shudder passed through his frame at the thought.

Slowly he began, as if almost thinking aloud, "I suppose you are right, Lemuel Weeks, in what you say about selling the place. The Lord knows I don't want to leave it. I was born and brought up here, and that counts with some people. If your wife's cousin is willing to come and help me make a living, for such wages as I can pay, the arrangement might be made. But I want to look on it as a business arrangement. I have quiet ways of my own, and things belonging to the past to think about, and I've got a right to think about 'em. I ain't one of the marrying kind, and I don't want people to be a-considering such notions when I don't. I'd be kind and all that to her and her little girl, but I should want to be left to myself as far as I could be."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Weeks, mentally chuckling over the slight prospect of such immunity, "but you must remember that Mrs. Mumpson isn't like common help—"

"That's where the trouble will come in," ejaculated the perplexed farmer, "but there's been trouble enough with the other sort."

"I should say so," Mr. Weeks remarked, emphatically. "It would be a pity if you couldn't get along with such a respectable, conscientious woman as Mrs. Mumpson, who comes from one of the best families in the country."

Holcroft removed his hat and passed his hand over his brow wearily as he said, "Oh, I could get along with any one who would do the work in a way that would give me a chance to make a little, and then leave me to myself."

"Well, well," said Mr. Weeks, laughing, "you needn't think that because I've hinted at a good match for you I'm making one for my wife's cousin. You may see the day when you'll be more hot for it than she is. All I'm trying to do is to help you keep your place, and live like a man ought and stop people's mouths."

"If I could only fill my own and live in peace, it's all I ask. When I get to plowing and planting again I'll begin to take some comfort."

These words were quoted against Holcroft far and near. "Filling his own mouth and making a little money are all he cares for," was the general verdict. And thus people are misunderstood. The farmer had never turned any one hungry from his door, and he would have gone to the poorhouse rather than have acted the part of the man who misrepresented him. He had only meant to express the hope that he might be able to fill his mouth—earn his bread, and get it from his native soil. "Plowing and planting"—working where he had toiled since a child, would be a solace in itself, and not a grudged means to a sordid end.

Mr. Weeks was a thrifty man also, and in nothing was he more economical than in charitable views of his neighbors' motives and conduct. He drove homeward with the complacent feeling that he had done a shrewd, good thing for himself and "his folks" at least. His wife's cousin was not exactly embraced in the latter category, although he had been so active in her behalf. The fact was, he would be at much greater pains could he attach her to Holcroft or any one else and so prevent further periodical visits. He regarded her and her child as barnacles with such appalling adhesive powers that even his ingenuity at "crowding out" had been baffled. In justice to him, it must be admitted that Mrs. Mumpson was a type of the poor relation that would tax the

long-suffering of charity itself. Her husband had left her scarcely his blessing, and if he had fled to ills he knew not of, he believed that he was escaping from some of which he had a painfully distinct consciousness. His widow was one of the people who regard the "world as their oyster," and her scheme of life was to get as much as possible for nothing. Arrayed in mourning weeds, she had begun a system of periodical descents upon his relatives and her own. She might have made such visitations endurable and even welcome, but she was not shrewd enough to be sensible. She appeared to have developed only the capacity to talk, to pry and to worry people. She was unable to rest or to permit others to rest, yet her aversion to any useful form of activity was her chief characteristic. Wherever she went, she took the ground that she was "company," and, with a shawl hanging over her sharp, angular shoulders, she would seize upon the most comfortable rocking-chair in the house, and mouse for bits of news about every one of whom she had ever heard. She was quite as ready to tell all she knew also, and for the sake of her budget of gossip and small scandal, her female relatives tolerated her after a fashion for a time; but she had been around so often, and her scheme of obtaining subsistence for herself and child had become so offensively apparent, that she had about exhausted the patience of all the kith and kin on whom she had the remotest claim. Her presence was all the more unwelcome by reason of the faculty for irritating the men of the various households which she invaded. Even the most phlegmatic or the best-natured lost their self-control, and, as their wives declared, "felt like flying all to pieces" at her incessant rocking, gossiping, questioning, and, what was worse still, lecturing. Not the least endurable thing about Mrs. Mumpson was her peculiar phase of piety. She saw the delinquencies and duties of others with such painful distinctness that she felt compelled to speak of them; and her zeal was sure to be instant out of season.

When Mr. Weeks had started on his ominous mission to

Holcroft his wife remarked to her daughter, confidentially, "I declare, sis, if we don't get rid of Cynthy soon, I believe Lemuel will fly off the handle."

To avoid any such dire catastrophe, it was hoped and almost prayed in the Weeks household that the lonely occupant of the hill farm would take the widow for good and all.

CHAPTER III

MRS. MUMPSON NEGOTIATES AND YIELDS

MR. WEEKS, on his return home, dropped all diplomacy in dealing with the question at issue. "Cynthy," he said in his own vernacular, "the end has come so far as me and my folks are concerned—I never expect to visit you, and while I'm master of the house, no more visits will be received. But I hain't taken any such stand onconsiderately," he concluded. "I've given up the whole forenoon to secure you a better chance of living than visiting around. If you go to Holcroft's, you'll have to do some work, and so will your girl. But he'll hire some one to help you, and so you won't have to hurt yourself. Your trump card will be to hook him and marry him before he finds you out. To do this, you'll have to see to the house and dairy, and bestir yourself for a time at least. He's pretty desperate off for lack of woman-folks to look after indoor matters, but he'll sell out and clear out before he'll keep a woman, much less marry her, if she does nothing but talk. Now remember, you've got a chance which you won't get again, for Holcroft not only owns his farm, but has a snug sum in the bank. So you had better get your things together, and go right over while he's in the mood."

When Mrs. Mumpson reached the blank wall of the inevitable, she yielded, and not before. She saw that the Weeks mine was worked out completely, and she knew that this exhaustion was about equally true of all similar mines which had been bored until they would yield no further returns.

But Mr. Weeks soon found that he could not carry out his summary measures. The widow was bent on negotia-

tions and binding agreements. In a stiff, cramped hand, she wrote to Holcroft in regard to the amount of "salary" he would be willing to pay, intimating that one burdened with such responsibilities as she was expected to assume "ort to be compansiated proposhundly."

Weeks groaned as he despatched his son on horseback with this first epistle, and Holcroft groaned as he read it, not on account of its marvellous spelling and construction, but by reason of the vista of perplexities and trouble it opened to his boding mind. But he named on half a sheet of paper as large a sum as he felt it possible to pay and leave any chance for himself, then affixed his signature and sent it back by the messenger.

The widow Mumpson wished to talk over this first point between the high contracting powers indefinitely, but Mr. Weeks remarked, cynically, "It's double what I thought he'd offer, and you're lucky to have it in black and white. Now that everything's settled, Timothy will hitch up and take you and Jane up there at once."

But Mrs. Mumpson now began to insist upon writing another letter in regard to her domestic status and that of her child. They could not think of being looked upon as servants. She also wished to be assured that a girl would be hired to help her, that she should have all the church privileges to which she had been accustomed and the right to visit and entertain her friends, which meant every farmer's wife and all the maiden sisters in Oakville. "And then," she continued, "there are always little perquisites which a housekeeper has a right to look for—" Mr. Weeks irritably put a period to this phase of diplomacy by saying, "Well, well, Cynthy, the stage will be along in a couple of hours. We'll put you and your things aboard and you can go on with what you call your negotiations at cousin Abiram's. I can tell you one thing, though—if you write any such letter to Holcroft, you'll never hear from him again."

Compelled to give up all these preliminaries, but inwardly resolving to gain each point by a nagging persistence of

which she was a mistress, she finally declared that she "must have writings about one thing which couldn't be left to any man's changeful mind. He must agree to give me the monthly salary he names for at least a year."

Weeks thought a moment, and then, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes, admitted, "It would be a good thing to have Holcroft's name to such an agreement. Yes, you might try that on, but you're taking a risk. If you were not so penny wise and pound foolish you'd go at once and manage to get him to take you for 'better or worse.'"

"You misjudge me, cousin Lemuel," replied the widow, bridling and rocking violently. "If there's any such taking to be done, he must get me to take him."

"Well, well, write your letter about a year's engagement. That'll settle you for a twelvemonth, at least."

Mrs. Mumpson again began the slow, laborious construction of a letter in which she dwelt upon the uncertainties of life, her "duty to her offspring," and the evils of "vicissitude." "A stable home is woman's chief desire," she concluded, "and you will surely agree to pay me the salary you have said for a year."

When Holcroft read this second epistle he so far yielded to his first impulse that he half tore the sheet, then paused irresolutely. After a few moments he went to the door and looked out upon his acres. "It'll soon be plowing and planting time," he thought. "I guess I can stand her—at least I can try it for three months. I'd like to turn a few more furrows on the old place," and his face softened and grew wistful as he looked at the bare, frost-bound fields. Suddenly it darkened and grew stern as he muttered, "But I'll put my hand to no more paper with that Weeks tribe."

He strode to the stable, saying to Timothy Weeks, as he passed, "I'll answer this letter in person."

Away cantered Timothy, and soon caused a flutter of expectancy in the Weeks household, by announcing that "old Holcroft looked back as a thunder cloud and was comin' himself."

"I tell you what 'tis, Cynthy, it's the turn of a hair with you now," growled Weeks. "Unless you agree to whatever Holcroft says, you haven't a ghost of a chance."

The widow felt that a crisis had indeed come. Cousin Abiram's was the next place in the order of visitation, but her last experience there left her in painful doubt as to a future reception. Therefore she tied on a new cap, smoothed her apron, and rocked with unwonted rapidity. "It'll be according to the ordering of Providence—"

"Oh, pshaw!" interrupted cousin Lemuel, "it'll be according to whether you've got any sense or not."

Mrs. Weeks had just been in a pitiable state of mind all day. She saw that her husband had reached the limit of his endurance—that he had virtually already "flown off the handle." But to have her own kin actually bundled out of the house—what would people say? Acceptance of Holcroft's terms, whatever they might be, was the only way out of the awkward predicament, and so she began in a wheedling tone, "Now, cousin Cynthy, as Lemuel says, you've got a first-rate chance. Holcroft's had an awful time with women, and he'll be glad enough to do well by any one who does fairly well by him. Everybody says he's well off, and once you're fairly there and get things in your own hands, there's no telling what may happen. He'll get a girl to help you, and Jane's big enough now to do a good deal. Why, you'll be the same as keeping house like the rest of us."

Further discussion was cut short by the arrival of the victim. He stood awkwardly in the door of the Weeks sitting-room for a moment, seemingly at a loss how to state his case.

Mr. and Mrs. Weeks now resolved to appear neutral and allow the farmer to make his terms. Then, like other superior powers in the background, they proposed to exert a pressure on their relative and do a little coercing. But the widow's course promised at first to relieve them of all further effort. She suddenly seemed to become aware of Holcroft's presence, sprang up and gave him her hand very cordially.

"I'm glad to see you, sir," she began. "It's very con-

siderate of you to come for me. I can get ready in short order, and as for Jane, she's never a bit of trouble. Sit down, sir, and make yourself to home while I get our things together and put on my bonnet;" and she was about to hasten from the room.

She, too, had been compelled to see that Holcroft's farmhouse was the only certain refuge left, and while she had rocked and waited the thought had come into her scheming mind, "I've stipulated to stay a year, and if he says nothing against it, it's a bargain which I can manage to keep him to in spite of himself, even if I don't marry him."

But the straightforward farmer was not to be caught in such a trap. He had come himself to say certain words and he would say them. He quietly, therefore, stood in the door and said, "Wait a moment, Mrs. Mumpson. It's best to have a plain understanding in all matters of business. When I've done, you may conclude not to go with me, for I want to say to you what I said this morning to your cousin, Lemuel Weeks. I'm glad he and his wife are now present, as witnesses. I'm a plain man, and all I want is to make a livin' off the farm I've been brought up on. I'll get a girl to help you with the work. Between you, I'll expect it to be done in a way that the dairy will yield a fair profit. We'll try and see how we get on for three months and not a year. I'll not bind myself longer than three months. Of course, if you manage well, I'll be glad to have this plain business arrangement go on as long as possible, but it's all a matter of business. If I can't make my farm pay, I'm going to sell or rent and leave these parts."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, Mr. Holcroft. You take a very sensible view of affairs. I hope you will find that I will do all that I agree to and a great deal more. I'm a little afraid of the night air and the inclement season, and so will hasten to get myself and my child ready," and she passed quickly out.

Weeks put his hand to his mouth to conceal a grin as he thought, "She hasn't agreed to do anything that I know on.

Still, she's right; she'll do a sight more than he expects, but it won't be just what he expects."

Mrs. Weeks followed her relative to expedite matters, and it must be confessed that the gathering of Mrs. Mumpson's belongings was no heavy task. A small hair trunk that had come down from the remote past held her own and her child's wardrobe and represented all their worldly possessions.

Mr. Weeks, much pleased at the turn of affairs, became very affable, but confined his remarks chiefly to the weather, while Holcroft, who had an uneasy sense of being overreached in some undetected way, was abstracted and laconic. He was soon on the road home, however, with Mrs. Mumpson and Jane. Cousin Lemuel's last whispered charge was, "Now, for mercy's sake, do keep your tongue still and your hands busy."

Whatever possibilities there may be for the Ethiopian or the leopard, there was no hope that Mrs. Mumpson would materially change any of her characteristics. The chief reason was that she had no desire to change. A more self-complacent person did not exist in Oakville. Good traits in other people did not interest her. They were insipid, they lacked a certain pungency which a dash of evil imparts; and in the course of her minute investigations she had discerned or surmised so much that was reprehensible that she had come to regard herself as singularly free from sins of omission and commission. "What have I ever done?" she would ask in her self-communings. The question implied so much truth of a certain kind that all her relatives were in gall and bitterness as they remembered the weary months during which she had rocked idly at their firesides. With her, talking was as much of a necessity as breathing, but during the ride to the hillside farm she, in a sense, held her breath, for a keen March wind was blowing.

She was so quiet that Holcroft grew hopeful, not realizing that the checked flow of words must have freer course later on. A cloudy twilight was deepening fast when they

reached the dwelling. Holcroft's market-wagon served for the general purposes of conveyance, and he drove as near as possible to the kitchen door. Descending from the front seat, which he had occupied alone, he turned and offered his hand to assist the widow to alight, but she nervously poised herself on the edge of the vehicle and seemed to be afraid to venture. The wind fluttered her scanty draperies, causing her to appear like a bird of prey about to swoop down upon the unprotected man. "I'm afraid to jump so far," she began.

"There's the step, Mrs. Mumpson."

"But I can't see it. Would you mind lifting me down?"

He impatiently took her by the arms, which seemed in his grasp like the rounds of a chair, and put her on the ground.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in gushing tones, "there's nothing to equal the strong arms of a man."

He hastily lifted out her daughter, and said, "You had better hurry in to the fire. I'll be back in a few minutes," and he led his horses down to the barn, blanketed and tied them. When he returned, he saw two dusky figures standing by the front door which led to the little hall separating the kitchen from the parlor.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "You haven't been standing here all this time?"

"It's merely due to a little oversight. The door is locked, you see, and—"

"But the kitchen door is not locked."

"Well, it didn't seem quite natural for us to enter the dwelling on the occasion of our first arrival by the kitchen entrance, and—"

Holcroft, with a grim look, strode through the kitchen and unlocked the door.

"Ah!" exclaimed the widow. "I feel as if I was coming home. Enter, Jane, my dear. I'm sure the place will soon cease to be strange to you, for the home feeling is rapidly acquired when—"

"Just wait a minute, please," said Holcroft, "and I'll light the lamp and a candle." This he did with the deftness of a man accustomed to help himself, then led the way to the upper room which was to be her sleeping apartment. Placing the candle on the bureau, he forestalled Mrs. Mumpson by saying, "I'll freshen up the fire in the kitchen and lay out the ham, eggs, coffee and other materials for supper. Then I must go out and unharness and do my night work. Make yourselves to home. You'll soon be able to find everything," and he hastened away.

It would not be their fault if they were not soon able to find everything. Mrs. Mumpson's first act was to take the candle and survey the room in every nook and corner. She sighed when she found the closet and bureau drawers empty. Then she examined the quantity and texture of the bedding of the "couch on which she was to repose" as she would express herself. Jane followed her around on tiptoe, doing just what her mother did, but was silent. At last they shivered in the fireless apartment, threw off their scanty wraps and went down to the kitchen. Mrs. Mumpson instinctively looked around for a rocking-chair, and as none was visible she hastened to the parlor, and, holding the candle aloft, surveyed this apartment. Jane followed in her wake as before, but at last ventured to suggest, "Mother, Mr. Holcroft'll be in soon and want his supper."

"I suppose he'll want a great many things," replied Mrs. Mumpson, with dignity, "but he can't expect a lady of my connections to fly around like a common servant. It is but natural, in coming to a new abode, that I should wish to know something of that abode. There should have been a hired girl here ready to receive and get supper for us. Since there is not one to receive us, bring that rocking-chair, my dear, and I will direct you how to proceed."

The child did as she was told, and her mother was soon rocking on the snuggest side of the kitchen stove, interspersing her rather bewildering orders with various reflections and surmises.

Sketching the child Jane is a sad task, and pity would lead us to soften every touch if this could be done in truthfulness. She was but twelve years of age, yet there was scarcely a trace of childhood left in her colorless face. Stealthy and cat-like in all her movements, she gave the impression that she could not do the commonest thing except in a sly, cowering manner. Her small greenish-gray eyes appeared to be growing nearer together with the lapse of time, and their indirect, furtive glances suggested that they had hardly, if ever, seen looks of frank affection bent upon her. She had early learned, on the round of visits with her mother, that so far from being welcome she was scarcely tolerated, and she reminded one of a stray cat that comes to a dwelling and seeks to maintain existence there in a lurking, deprecatory manner. Her kindred recognized this feline trait, for they were accustomed to remark, "She's always snoopin' around."

She could scarcely do otherwise, poor child! there had seemed no place for her at any of the firesides. She haunted halls and passage-ways, sat in dusky corners, and kept her meagre little form out of sight as much as possible. She was the last one helped at table when she was permitted to come at all, and so had early learned to watch, like a cat, and when people's backs were turned, to snatch something, carry it off, and devour it in secret. Detected in these little pilferings, to which she was almost driven, she was regarded as even a greater nuisance than her mother.

The latter was much too pre-occupied to give her child attention. Ensconced in a rocking-chair in the best room, and always in full tide of talk if there was any one present, she rarely seemed to think where Jane was or what she was doing. The rounds of visitation gave the child no chance to go to school, so her developing mind had little other pabulum than what her mother supplied so freely. She was acquiring the same consuming curiosity, with the redeeming feature that she did not talk. Listening in unsuspected places, she heard much that was said about her

mother and herself, and the pathetic part of this experience was that she had never known enough of kindness to be wounded. She was only made to feel more fully how precarious was her foothold in her transient abiding place, and therefore was rendered more furtive, sly and distant in order to secure toleration by keeping out of every one's way. In her prowlings, however, she managed to learn and understand all that was going on even better than her mother, who, becoming aware of this fact, was acquiring the habit of putting her through a whispered cross-questioning when they retired for the night.

It would be hard to imagine a child beginning life under more unfavorable auspices and still harder to predict the outcome.

In the course of her close watchfulness she had observed how many of the domestic labors had been performed, and she would have helped more in the various households if she had been given a chance; but the housewives had not regarded her as sufficiently honest to be trusted in the pantries, and also found that if there was a semblance of return for such hospitality as they extended, Mrs. Mumpson would remain indefinitely. Moreover, the homely, silent child made the women nervous, just as her mother irritated the men, and they did not want her around. Thus she had come to be but the spectre of a child, knowing little of the good in the world and as much of the evil as she could understand.

She now displayed, however, more sense than her mother. The habit of close scrutiny had made it clear that Holcroft would not long endure genteel airs and inefficiency, and that something must be done to keep this shelter. She did her best to get supper, with the aid given from the rocking-chair, and at last broke out sharply, "You must get up and help me. He'll turn us out of doors if we don't have supper ready when he comes in."

Spurred by fear of such a dire possibility, Mrs. Mumpson was bustling around when Holcroft entered. "We'll soon

be ready," she gushed, "we'll soon place our evening repast upon the table."

"Very well," was the brief reply, as he passed up the stairs with the small hair trunk on his shoulder.

CHAPTER IV

DOMESTIC BLISS

HOLCROFT had been given a foretaste of the phase of torment which he was destined to endure in his domestic relations, and was planning to secure a refuge into which he could not be pursued. He had made himself a little more presentable for supper, instinctively aware that nothing would escape the lynx-eyed widow, and was taking some measurements from the floor to a stove-pipe hole leading into the chimney flue, when he became aware that some one was in the doorway. Turning, he saw Jane with her small, cat-like eyes fixed intently upon him. Instantly he had the feeling that he was being watched and would be watched.

"Supper's ready," said the girl, disappearing.

Mrs. Mumpson smiled upon him—if certain contortions of her thin, sharp face could be termed a smile—from that side of the table at which his wife had sat so many years, and he saw that the low rocking-chair which he had preserved jealously from his former "help" had been brought from the parlor and established in the old familiar place. Mrs. Mumpson folded her hands and assumed a look of deep solemnity; Jane, as instructed, also lowered her head, and they waited for him to say "grace." He was in far too bitter a mood for any such pious farce, and stolidly began to help them to the ham and eggs, which viands had been as nearly spoiled as was possible in their preparation. The widow raised her head with a profound sigh which set

Holcroft's teeth on edge, but he proceeded silently with his supper. The biscuits were heavy enough to burden the lightest conscience; and the coffee, simply grounds swimming around in lukewarm water. He took a sip, then put down his cup and said, quietly, "Guess I'll take a glass of milk to-night. Mrs. Mumpson, if you don't know how to make coffee, I can soon show you."

"Why! isn't it right? How strange! Perhaps it would be well for you to show me just exactly how you like it, for it will afford me much pleasure to make it to your taste. Men's tastes differ so! I've heard that no two men's tastes were alike; and, after all, everything is a matter of taste. Now cousin Abiram doesn't believe in coffee at all. He thinks it is unwholesome. Have you ever thought that it might be unwholesome?"

"I'm used to it, and would like it good when I have it at all."

"Why, of course, of course, you must have it exactly to your taste.—Jane, my dear, we must put our minds on coffee and learn precisely how Mr. Holcroft likes it, and when the hired girl comes we must carefully superintend her when she makes it.—By the way, I suppose you will employ my assistant to-morrow, Mr. Holcroft?"

"I can't get a girl short of town," was the reply, "and there is so much cream in the dairy that ought to be churned at once that I'll wait till next Monday and take down the butter."

Mrs. Mumpson put on a grave, injured air, and said, "Well," so disapprovingly that it was virtually saying that it was not well at all. Then, suddenly remembering that this was not good policy, she was soon all smiles and chatter again. "How cosey this is!" she cried, "and how soon one acquires the home feeling! Why, any one looking in at the window would think that we were an old-established family, and yet this is but our first meal together. But it won't be the last, Mr. Holcroft. I cannot make it known to you how your loneliness, which cousin Lemuel has so feel-

ingly described to me, has effected my feelings. Cousin Nancy said but this very day that you have had desperate times with all kinds of dreadful creatures. But all that's past. Jane and me will give a look of stability and respectability to every comer."

"Well, really, Mrs. Mumpson, I don't know who's to come."

"Oh, you'll see," she replied, wrinkling her thin, blue lips into what was meant for a smile, and nodding her head at him encouragingly. "You won't be so isolated no more. Now that I'm here, with my offspring, your neighbors will feel that they can show you their sympathy. The most respecterble people in town will call, and your life will grow brighter and brighter; clouds will roll away, and—"

"I hope the neighbors will not be so ill-mannered as to come without being invited," remarked Mr. Holcroft, very grimly. "It's too late in the day for them to begin now."

"My being here with Jane will make all the difference in the world," resumed Mrs. Mumpson, with as saccharine an expression as she could assume. "They will come out of pure kindness and friendly interest with the wish to encourage—"

"Mrs. Mumpson," said Holcroft, half desperately, "if any one comes it'll be out of pure curiosity, and I don't want such company. Selling enough butter, eggs and produce to pay expenses will encourage me more than all the people of Oakville if they should come in a body. What's the use of talking in this way? I've done without the neighbors so far, and I'm sure they've been very careful to do without me. I shall have nothing to do with them except in the way of business, and as I said to you down at Lemuel Weeks's, business must be the first consideration with us all," and he rose from the table.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," the widow hastened to say, "but then business is like a cloud, and the meetings and greetings of friends is a sort of silver lining, you know.

What would the world be without friends—the society of those who take an abiding interest? Believe me, Mr. Holcroft," she continued, bringing her long, skinny finger impressively down on the table, "you have lived alone so long that you are unable to see the crying needs of your own constitution. As a Christian man, you require human sympathy and—"

Poor Holcroft knew little of centrifugal force; but at that moment he was a living embodiment of it, feeling that if he did not escape he would fly into a thousand atoms. Saying nervously, "I've a few chores to do," he seized his hat, and hastening out, wandered disconsolately around the barn. "I'm never going to be able to stand her," he groaned. "I know now why my poor wife shook her head whenever this woman was mentioned. The clack of her tongue would drive any man living crazy, and the gimlet eyes of that girl Jane would bore holes through a saint's patience. Well, well, I'll put a stove up in my room, then plowing and planting time will soon be here, and I guess I can stand it at meal times for three months, for unless she stops her foolishness she shan't stay any longer."

Jane had not spoken during the meal, but kept her eyes on Holcroft, except when he looked toward her, and then she instantly averted her gaze. When she was alone with her mother, she said abruptly, "We ain't agoin' to stay here long, nuther."

"Why not?" was the sharp, responsive query.

"'Cause the same look's comin' into his face that was in cousin Lemuel's and cousin Abiram's and all the rest of 'em. 'Fi's you I'd keep still now. 'Pears to me they all want you to keep still and you won't."

"Jane," said Mrs. Mumpson, in severe tones, "you're an ignorant child. Don't presume to instruct me! Besides, this case is entirely different. Mr. Holcroft must be made to understand from the start that I'm not a common woman—that I'm his equal, and in most respects his superior. If he ain't made to feel this, it'll never enter his head—but

law! there's things which you can't and oughtn't to understand."

"But I do," said the girl, shortly, "and he won't marry you, nor keep you if you talk him to death."

"Jane!" gasped Mrs. Mumpson, as she sank into the chair and rocked violently.

The night air was keen and soon drove Holcroft into the house. As he passed the kitchen window, he saw that Mrs. Mumpson was in his wife's rocking-chair and that Jane was clearing up the table. He kindled a fire on the parlor hearth, hoping, but scarcely expecting, that he would be left alone.

Nor was he very long, for the widow soon opened the door and entered, carrying the chair. "Oh, you are here," she said, sweetly. "I heard the fire crackling, and I do so love open, wood fires. They're company in themselves, and they make those who bask in the flickering blaze inclined to be sociable. To think of how many long lonely evenings you have sat here when you had persons in your employ with whom you could have no affinity whatever! I don't see how you stood it. Under such circumstances life must cloud up into a dreary burden." It never occurred to Mrs. Mumpson that her figures of speech were often mixed. She merely felt that the sentimental phase of conversation must be very flowery. But during the first evening she had resolved on prudence. "Mr. Holcroft shall have time," she thought, "for the hope to steal into his heart that his housekeeper may become something more to him than housekeeper—that there is a nearer and loftier relation."

Meanwhile she was consumed with curiosity to know something about the "persons" previously employed and his experiences with them. With a momentary, and, as she felt, a proper pause before descending to ordinary topics, she resumed, "My dear Mr. Holcroft, no doubt it will be a relief to your overfraught mind to pour into a symperthetic ear the story of your troubles with those—er—those peculiar females that—er—that—"

"Mrs. Mumpson, it would be a much greater relief to my mind to forget all about 'em," he replied, briefly.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the widow. "Was they as bad as that? Who'd a thought it! Well, well, well, what people there is in the world! And you couldn't abide 'em then?"

"No, I couldn't."

"Well now, what hussies they must have been! And to think you were here all alone with no better company! It makes my heart bleed. They do say that Bridget Malony is equal to anything, and I've no doubt but that she took things and did things."

"Well, she's taken herself off, and that's enough." Then he groaned inwardly, "Good Lord! I could stand her and all her tribe better'n this one."

"Yes, Mr. Holcroft," pursued Mrs. Mumpson, sinking her voice to a loud, confidential whisper, "and I don't believe you've any idea how much she took with her. I fear you've been robbed in all these vicissitudes. Men never know what's in a house. They need caretakers, respecterble women, that would sooner cut out their tongues than purloin. How happy is the change which has been affected! How could you abide in the house with such a person as that Bridget Malony?"

"Well, well, Mrs. Mumpson, she abode with herself. I at least had this room in peace and quietness."

"Of course, of course. A person so utterly unrespecterble would not think of entering this apartment; but then you had to meet her, you know. You could not act as if she was not, when she was, and there being so much of her, too. She was a monstrous looking person. It's dreadful to think that such persons belong to our sex. I don't wonder you feel as you do about it all. I can understand you perfectly. All your sensesbleness was offended. You felt that your very home had become sacrilegious. Well, now, I suppose she said awful things to you?"

Holcroft could not endure this style of inquisition and comment another second longer. He rose and said, "Mrs.

Mumpson, if you want to know just what she said and did you must go and ask her. I'm very tired. I'll go out and see that the stock's all right, and then go to bed."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," ejaculated the widow. "Repose is nature's sweet rester, says the poet. I can see how recalling those dreadful scenes with those peculiar females"—but he was gone.

In passing out, he caught sight of Jane whisking back into the kitchen. "She's been listening," he thought. "Well, I'll go to town to-morrow afternoon, get a stove for my room up stairs and stuff the key-hole."

He went to the barn and looked with envy at the placid cows and quiet horses. At last, having lingered as long as he could, he returned to the kitchen. Jane had washed and put away the supper dishes after a fashion, and was now sitting on the edge of a chair in the furthest corner of the room.

"Take this candle and go to your mother," he said curtly. Then he fastened the doors and put out the lamp. Standing for an instant at the parlor entrance, he added, "Please rake up the fire and put out the light before you come up. Good-night."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, we'll look after everything just as if it was our own. The sense of strangeness will soon pass"—but his steps were half-way up the stairs.

Mother and daughter listened until they heard him overhead, then taking the candle, they began a most minute examination of everything in the room.

Poor Holcroft listened also, too worried, anxious and nervous to sleep until they came up and all sounds ceased in the adjoining apartment.

CHAPTER V

MRS. MUMPSON TAKES UP HER BURDENS

THE next morning, Holcroft awoke early. The rising sun flooded his plain little room with mellow light. It was impossible to give way to dejection in that radiance, and hope, he scarcely knew why, sprung up in his heart. He was soon dressed, and having kindled the kitchen fire, went out on the porch. There had been a change in the wind during the night, and now it blew softly from the south. The air was sweet with the indefinable fragrance of spring. The ethereal notes of bluebirds were heard on every side. Migratory robins were feeding in the orchard, whistling and calling their noisy congratulations on arriving at old haunts. The frost was already oozing from the ground, but the farmer welcomed the mud, knowing that it indicated a long advance toward plowing and planting time. time.

He bared his head to the sweet, warm air and took long, deep breaths. "If this weather holds," he muttered, "I can soon put in some early potatoes on that warm hillside yonder. Yes, I can stand even her for the sake of being on the old place in mornings like this. The weather'll be getting better every day and I can be out of doors more. I'll have a stove in my room to-night; I would last night if the old air-tight hadn't given out completely. I'll take it to town this afternoon and sell it for old iron. Then I'll get a bran' new one and put it up in my room. They can't follow me there and they can't follow me out-doors, and so perhaps I can live in peace and work most of the time."

Thus he was murmuring to himself, as lonely people so often do, when he felt that some one was near. Turning suddenly, he saw Jane half-hidden by the kitchen door. Finding herself observed, the girl came forward and said in her brief, monotonous way—

"Mother'll be down soon. If you'll show me how you want the coffee and things, I guess I can learn."

"I guess you'll have to, Jane. There'll be more chance of your teaching your mother than of her teaching you, I fear. But we'll see, we'll see! it's strange people can't see what's sensible and best for 'em when they see so much."

The child made no reply, but watched him intently as he measured out and then ground half a cup of coffee.

"The first thing to do," he began, kindly, "is to fill the kettle with water fresh drawn from the well. Never make coffee or tea with water that's been boiled two or three times. Now, I'll give the kettle a good rinsing, so as to make sure you start with it clean."

Having accomplished this, he filled the vessel at the well and placed it on the fire, remarking as he did so, "Your mother can cook a little, can't she?"

"I s'pose so," Jane replied. "When father was livin' mother said she kept a girl. Since then, we've visited round. But she'll learn, and if she can't, I can."

"What on earth—but there's no use of talking. When the water boils, bubbles up and down, you know, call me. I suppose you and your mother can get the rest of the breakfast?—Oh, good morning, Mrs. Mumpson. I was just showing Jane about the coffee. You two can go on and do all the rest, but don't touch the coffee till the kettle boils and then I'll come in and show you my way, and, if you please, I don't wish it any other way."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," began Mrs. Mumpson, but Holcroft waited to hear no more.

"She's a woman," he muttered, "and I'll say nothing rude or ugly to her, but I sha'n't listen to her talk half a minute when I can help myself; and if she won't do any

thing but talk—well, we'll see, we'll see. A few hours in the dairy will show whether she can use anything besides her tongue."

As soon as they were alone Jane turned sharply on her mother and said, "Now you've got to do something to help. At cousin Lemuel's and other places they wouldn't let us help. Anyhow, they wouldn't let me. He spects us both to work, and pays you for it. I tell you agin, he won't let us stay here unless we do. I won't go visitin' round any more, feelin' like a stray cat in every house I go to. You've got to work, and talk less."

"Why Jane! how you talk!"

"I talk sense. Come, help me get breakfast."

"Do you think that's a proper way for a child to address a parent?"

"No matter what I think. Come and help. You'll soon know what he thinks if we keep breakfast waitin'."

"Well, I'll do such menial work until he gets a girl, and then he shall learn that he can't expect one with such respecterble connections—"

"Hope I may never see any of 'em agin," interrupted Jane, shortly, and then she relapsed into silence while her mother rambled on in her characteristic way, making singularly inapt efforts to assist in the task before them.

As Holcroft rose from milking a cow he found Jane beside him. A ghost could not have come more silently, and again her stealthy ways gave him an unpleasant sensation. "Kettle is boilin'," she said, and was gone.

He shook his head and muttered, "Queer tribe, these Mumpsons. I've only to get an odd fish of a girl to help and I'll have something like a menagerie in the house." He carried his pails of foaming milk to the dairy, and then entered the kitchen.

"I've only a minute," he began, hastily, seeking to forestall the widow. "Yes, the kettle's boiling all right. First scald out the coffee-pot—put three-quarters of a cup of ground coffee into the pot, break an egg into it, so; pour

on the egg and coffee half a cup of cold water and stir it all up well, this way. Next pour in about a pint of boiling water from the kettle, set the pot on the stove and let it—the coffee, I mean—cook twenty minutes, remember, not less than twenty minutes. I'll be back to breakfast by that time. Now you know just how I want my coffee, don't you?" looking at Jane.

Jane nodded, but Mrs. Mumpson began, "Oh, certainly, certainly. Boil an egg twenty minutes, add half a cup of cold water, and—"

"I know," interrupted Jane, "I can always do as you did."

Holcroft again escaped to the barn, and eventually returned with a deep sigh. "I'll have to face a good deal of her music this morning," he thought, "but I shall have at least a good cup of coffee to brace me."

Mrs. Mumpson did not abandon the suggestion that grace should be said—she never abandoned anything—but the farmer, in accordance with his purpose to be civil, yet pay no attention to her obtrusive ways, gave no heed to her hint. He thought Jane looked apprehensive, and soon learned the reason. His coffee was at least hot, but seemed exceedingly weak.

"I hope now that it's just right," said Mrs. Mumpson complacently, "and feeling sure that it was made just to suit you, I filled the coffee-pot full from the kettle. We can drink what we desire for breakfast and then the rest can be set aside until dinner time and warmed over. Then you'll have it just to suit you for the next meal, and we, at the same time, will be practicing econermy. It shall now be my great aim to help you econermize. Any coarse, menial hands can work, but the great thing to be considered is a caretaker, one who, by thoughtfulness and the employment of her mind, will make the labor of others affective."

During this speech, Holcroft could only stare at the woman. The rapid motion of her thin jaw seemed to fasci-

nate him, and he was in perplexity over not merely her rapid utterance, but also the queries. Had she maliciously spoiled the coffee? or didn't she know any better? "I can't make her out," he thought, "but she shall learn that I have a will of my own," and he quietly rose, took the coffee-pot and poured its contents out of doors; then went through the whole process of making his favorite beverage again, saying coldly, "Jane, you had better watch close this time. I don't wish any one to touch the coffee-pot but you."

Even Mrs. Mumpson was a little abashed by his manner, but when he resumed his breakfast she speedily recovered her complacency and volubility. "I've always heard," she said, with her little cackling laugh, "that men would be extravergant, especially in some things. There are some things they're fidgety about and will have just so. Well, well, who has a better right than a well-to-do, fore-handed man? Woman is to complement the man, and it should be her aim to study the great—the great—shall we say reason, for her being? which is adaptation," and she uttered the word with feeling, assured that Holcroft could not fail of being impressed by it. The poor man was bolting such food as had been prepared in his haste to get away.

"Yes," continued the widow, "adaptation is woman's mission and—"

"Really, Mrs. Mumpson, your and Jane's mission this morning will be to get as much butter as possible out of the cream and milk on hand. I'll set the old dog on the wheel, and start the churn within half an hour," and he rose with the thought, "I'd rather finish my breakfast on milk and coffee by and by than stand this." And he said, "Please let the coffee be until I come in to show you about taking out and working the butter."

The scenes in the dairy need not be dwelt upon. He saw that Jane might be taught, and that she would probably try to do all that her strength permitted. It was perfectly clear that Mrs. Mumpson was not only ignorant of the duties which he had employed her to perform, but that she was

also too preoccupied with her talk and notions of gentility ever to learn. He was already satisfied that in inducing him to engage her, Lemuel Weeks had played him a trick, but there seemed no other resource than to fulfil his agreement. With Mrs. Mumpson in the house, there might be less difficulty in securing and keeping a hired girl who, with Jane, might do the essential work. But the future looked so unpromising that even the strong coffee could not sustain his spirits. The hopefulness of the early morning departed, leaving nothing but dreary uncertainty.

Mrs. Mumpson was bent upon accompanying him to town and engaging the girl herself. "There would be great propriety in my doing so," she argued at dinner, "and propriety is something that adorns all the human race. There would be no danger of my getting any of the peculiar females such as you have been afflicted with. As I am to superintend her labors, she will look up to me with respect and humility if she learns from the first to recognize in me a superior on whom she will be dependent for her daily bread. No shiftless hussy would impose upon me. I would bring home—how sweet the word sounds!—a model of industry and patient endurance. She would be deferential, she would know her place, too. Everything would go like clockwork in our home. I'll put on my things at once and—"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Mumpson. It would not be right to leave Jane here alone. Moreover, I'd rather engage my own help."

"But, my dear Mr. Holcroft, you don't realize—men never do realize—that you will have a long, lonely ride with a female of unknown—unknown antercedents. It will be scarcely respecterble, and respecterbility should be man and woman's chief aim. Jane is not a timid child, and in an emergency like this, even if she was, she would gladly sacrifice herself to sustain the proprieties of life. Now that your life has begun under new and better auspices, I feel that I ought to plead with you not to cloud your brightening prospects by a thoughtless unregard of what society looks

upon as proper. The eyes of the community will now be upon us—"

"You must excuse me, Mrs. Mumpson. All I ask of the community is to keep their eyes on their own business, while I attend to mine in my own way. The probabilities are that the girl will come out on the stage Monday," and he rose from the dinner-table and hastily made his preparations for departure. He was soon driving rapidly away, having a sort of nervous apprehension lest Jane, or the widow, should suddenly appear on the seat beside him. A basket of eggs and some inferior butter, with the burned-out stove, were in his wagon and his bank-book was in his pocket. It was with sinking heart that he thought of making further inroads on his small accumulations.

Before he was out of sight, Mrs. Mumpson betook herself to the rocking-chair and began to expatiate on the blindness and obduracy of men in general and of Mr. Holcroft in particular. "They are all much alike," she complained, "and are strangely neglectful of the proprieties of life. My dear, deceased husband, your father, was becoming gradually sensible of my value in guiding him in this respect, and indeed, I may add in all respects, when in the very prime of his expanding manhood he was laid low. Of course, my happiness was buried then and my heart can never throb again, but I have a mission in the world—I feel it—and here is a desolate home bereft of female influence and consolation and hitherto painfully devoid of respecterbility. I once called on the late Mrs. Holcroft, and—I must say it—I went away depressed by a sense of her lack of ability to develop in her husband those qualities which would make him an ornerment to society. She was a silent woman, she lacked mind and ideas. She had seen little of the world and knew not what was swaying people. Therefore, her husband, having nothing else to think of, became absorbed in the accumulation of dollars. Not that I object to dollars—they have their proper place—but minds should be fixed on all things. We should take a deep personal interest in

our fellow beings, and thus we grow broad. As I was saying, Mr. Holcroft was not developed by his late spouse. He needs awakening, arousing, stimulating, drawing out, and such I feel to be my mission. I must be patient; I cannot expect the habits of years to pass away under a different kind of female influence, at once."

Jane had been stolidly washing and putting away dishes during this partial address to herself and partial soliloquy, but now remarked, "You and me will pass away in a week if you go on as you've begun. I can see it comin'. Then where'll we go to?"

"Your words, Jane, only show that you are an ignorant, shortsighted child. Do you suppose that a woman of my years and experience would make no better provision for the future than a man's changeful mind—a warped and undeveloped mind at that? No; I have an agreement with Mr. Holcroft. I shall be a member of his household for three months at least, and long before that he will begin to see everything in a new light. It will gradually dawn upon him that he has been defrauded of proper female influence and society. Now, he is crude, he thinks only of work and accumulating, but when the work is done by a menial female's hands and his mind is more at rest, there will begin to steal in upon him the cravings of his mind. He will see that material things are not all in all."

"P'raps he will. I don't half know what you're talkin' about. 'Fi's you I'd learn to work and do things as he wants 'em. That's what I'm goin' to do. Shall I go now and make up his bed and tidy his room?"

"I think I will accompany you, Jane, and see that your task is properly performed."

"Of course you want to see everythin' in the room, just as I do."

"As housekeeper, I should see everything that is under my care. That is the right way to look at the matter."

"Well, come and look then."

"You are becoming strangely disrerspectful, Jane."

"Can't help it," replied the girl, "I'm gettin' mad. We've been elbowed around long's I can remember, at least I've been, and now we're in a place where we've a right to be, and you do nothin' but talk, talk, talk, when he hates talk. Now you'll go up in his room and you'll see everythin' in it, so you could tell it all off to-morrow. Why, can't you see he hates talk and wants somethin' done?"

"Jane," said Mrs. Mumpson, in her most severe and dignified manner, "you are not only disrerspectful to your parent, but you're a time-server. What Mr. Holcroft wants is a very secondary matter; what is best for him is the chief consideration. But I have touched on things far above your comprehension. Come, you can make up the bed, and I shall inspect as becomes my station."

CHAPTER VI

A MARRIAGE?

IN a quiet side street of the market town in which Mr. Holcroft was accustomed to dispose of his farm produce, was a three-story tenement house. A family occupied each floor, those dwelling in the first two stories being plain, respectable people of the mechanic class. The rooms in the third story were, of course, the cheapest, but even from the street might be seen evidences that more money had been spent upon them than could have been saved in rent. Lace curtains were looped aside from the windows, through which were caught glimpses of flowers that must have come from a greenhouse. We have only to enter these apartments to find that the suggestion of refined taste is amply fulfilled. While nothing is costly, there is a touch of grace, a hint of beauty in everything permitting simple adornment. The mistress of these rooms is not satisfied with neatness and order merely! it is her instinct to add something to please the eye, a need essential to her, yet too often conspicuously absent in rented quarters of a similar character.

It is remarkable to what a degree people's abodes are a reflex of themselves. Mrs. Alida Ostrom had been brought to these rooms a happy bride but a few months since. They were then bare and not very clean. Her husband had seemed bent on indulging her so far as his limited means permitted. He had declared that his income was so modest that he could afford nothing better than these cheap rooms in an obscure street, but she had been abundantly content, for she had known even the extremity of poverty.

Alida Ostrom had passed beyond the period of girlhood,

with its superficial desires and ambitions. When her husband first met her, she was a woman of thirty and had been chastened by deep sorrows and some bitter experiences. Years before, she and her mother had come to this town from a New England city in the hope of bettering their circumstances. They had no weapons other than their needles with which to fight life's battle, but they were industrious and frugal—characteristic traits which won the confidence of the shopkeepers for whom they worked. All went as well, perhaps, as they could expect, for two or three years, their secluded lives passing uneventfully and, to a certain extent, happily. They had time to read some good books obtained at a public library; they enjoyed an occasional holiday in the country; and they went to church twice every Sunday when it was not stormy. The mother usually dozed in the obscure seat near the door, which they occupied, for she was getting old, and the toil of the long week wearied her. Alida, on the contrary, was closely attentive. Her mind seemed to crave all the sustenance it could get from every source, and her reverential manner indicated that the hopes inspired by her faith were dear and cherished. Although they lived such quiet lives and kept themselves apart from their neighbors, there was no mystery about them which awakened surmises. "They've seen better days," was the common remark when they were spoken of; and this was true. While they had no desire to be social with the people among whom they lived, they did not awaken prejudices by the assertion of superiority. Indeed, it was seen that the two women had all they could do to earn their livelihood, and they were left to do this in peace.

When Alida Armstrong—for that was her maiden name—carried her own and her mother's work to and from the shops, she often encountered admiring glances. She was not exactly pretty, but she had the good, refined face which is often more attractive than the merely pretty one, and she possessed a trim, rounded figure which she knew how to clothe with taste from the simplest and most inexpensive

materials. Nor did she seek to dress above her station. When passing along the street, any discerning person would recognize that she was a working girl; only the superficial would look upon her as a common-place girl. There was something in her modest air and graceful, elastic carriage which suggested the thought to many observers, "She has seen better days."

The memory of these days which had promised immunity from wearing toil, anxiety and poverty, was a barrier between the two women and their present world. Death had bereft them of husband and father, and such property as he had left had been lost in a bad investment. Learning that they were almost penniless, they had patiently set about earning honest bread. This they had succeeded in doing as long as the mother kept her usual health. But the infirmities of age were creeping upon her. One winter, she took a heavy cold and was very ill. She rallied only temporarily in the milder days of spring. In the summer's heat, her strength failed and she died.

During her mother's long illness, Alida was devotion itself. The strain upon her was severe indeed, for she not only had to earn food for both, but there were also doctor's bills, medicines and delicacies to pay for. The poor girl grew thin from work by day, watching by night and from fear and anxiety at all times. Their scanty savings were exhausted; articles were sold from their rooms; the few precious heirlooms of silver and china were disposed of; Alida even denied herself the food she needed rather than ask for help or permit her mother to want for anything which ministered to their vain hopes of renewed health.

What she should have done she scarcely knew had not an unexpected friend interested himself in her behalf. In one of the men's clothing stores was a cutter from whom she obtained work. Soon after he appeared in this shop he began to manifest signs of interest in her. He was about her own age, he had a good trade, and she often wondered why he appeared so reticent and moody, as compared with

others in similar positions. But he always spoke kindly to her, and when her mother's illness first developed, he showed all the leniency permitted to him in regard to her work. His apparent sympathy, and the need of explaining why she was not able to finish her tasks as promptly as usual, led her gradually to reveal to him the sad struggle in which she was engaged. He promised to intercede in her behalf with their mutual employers, and asked if he might come to see her mother.

Recognizing how dependent she was upon this man's goodwill, and seeing nothing in his conduct but kindness and sympathy, she consented. His course and his words confirmed all her good impressions and awakened on her side corresponding sympathy united with a lively gratitude. He told her that he also was a stranger in the town, that he had but few acquaintances and no friends, that he had lost relatives and was in no mood to go about like other young men. His manner was marked apparently by nothing more than interest and a wish to help her, and was untinged by gallantry; so they gradually became good friends. When he called Sunday afternoons, the mother looked at him wistfully, in the hope that her daughter would not be left without a protector. At last, the poor woman died, and Alida was in sore distress, for she had no means with which to bury her. Ostrom came and said in the kindest tones—"You must let me lend you what you need and you can pay me back with interest, if you wish. You won't be under any obligation, for I have money lying idle in the bank. When you have only yourself to support it will not take you long to earn the sum."

There seemed nothing else for her to do and so it was arranged. With tear-blinded eyes, she made her simple mourning, and within a week after her mother's death was at work again, eager to repay her debt. He urged her not to hasten—to take all the rest she could while the hot weather lasted, and few evenings passed that he did not come to take her out for a walk through the quieter streets.

By this time he had won her confidence completely, and her heart overflowed with gratitude. Of course she was not so unsophisticated as not to know whither all this attention was tending, but it was a great relief to her mind that his courtship was so quiet and undemonstrative. Her heart was sore and grief-stricken and she was not conscious of any other feeling toward him than the deepest gratitude and wish to make such return as was within her power. He was apparently very frank in regard to his past life, and nothing was said which excited her suspicions. Indeed, she felt that it would be disloyalty to think of questioning or surmising evil of one who had proved himself so true a friend in her sore need. She was therefore somewhat prepared for the words he spoke one warm September day, as they sat together in a little shaded park.

"Alida," he said, a little nervously, "we are both strangers and alone in this world, but surely we are no longer strangers to each other. Let us go quietly to some minister and be married. That is the best way for you to pay your debt and keep me always in debt to you."

She was silent a moment, then faltered, "I'd rather pay all my debt first."

"What debts can there be between husband and wife? Come now, let us look at the matter sensibly. I don't want to frighten you. Things will go on much the same. We can take quiet rooms, I will bring work to you instead of your having to go after it. It's nobody's business but our own. We've not a circle of relations to consult or invite. We can go to some parsonage, the minister's family will be the witnesses; then I'll leave you at your room as usual, and no one will be any the wiser till I've found a place where we can go to housekeeping. That won't be long, I can tell you."

He placed the matter in such a simple, natural light that she did not know how to refuse.

"Perhaps I do not love you as much as you ought to be loved, and deserve to be in view of all your kindness," she tried to explain. "I feel I ought to be very truthful and

not deceive you in the least, as I know you would not deceive me." So strong a shiver passed through his frame that she exclaimed, "You are taking cold or you don't feel well."

"Oh, it's nothing," he said, hastily, "only the night air; and then a fellow always feels a little nervous, I suppose, when he's asking for something on which his happiness depends. I'm satisfied with such feeling and goodwill as you have for me and will be only too glad to get you just as you are. Come, before it is too late in the evening."

"Is your heart bent on this, after what I have said, Wilson?"

"Yes, yes indeed," clasping her hand and drawing her to her feet.

"It would seem very ungrateful in me to refuse, after all you have done for me and mother, if you think it's right and best. Will you go to the minister whose church I attended, and who came to see mother?"

"Certainly, any one you like," and he put her hand on his arm and led her away.

The clergyman listened sympathetically to her brief history of Ostrom's kindness, then performed a simple ceremony which his wife and daughters witnessed. As they were about to depart he said, "I will send you a certificate."

"Don't trouble yourself to do that," said the groom. "I'll call for it some evening soon."

Never had she seen Ostrom in such gay spirits as on their return; and, womanlike, she was happy chiefly because she had made him happy. She also felt a glad sense of security. Her mother's dying wish had been fulfilled; she had now a protector, and would soon have a home instead of a boarding-place among strangers.

Her husband speedily found the rooms to which the reader has been introduced. The street on which they were located was no thoroughfare. Its further end was closed by a fence and beyond were fields. With the exception of those who dwelt upon it or had business with the residents,

few people came thither. To this locality, Ostrom brought his bride, and selected rooms whose windows were above those of the surrounding houses. So far from regretting this isolation and remoteness from the central life of the town. Alida's feelings sanctioned his choice. The sense of possessing security and a refuge was increased, and it was as natural for her to set about making the rooms homelike as it was to breathe. Her husband appeared to have exhausted his tendencies toward close economy in the choice of apartments, and she was given more money than she desired with which to furnish and decorate. He said, "Fix everything up to suit your mind and I'll be satisfied."

This she did with such skill, taste and good management that she returned a large portion of the sum he had given her, whereupon he laughingly remarked that she had already saved more than she owed him. He seemed disinclined to accompany her in the selection of their simple outfit, but professed himself so pleased with her choice of everything that she was gratified and happy in the thought of relieving him from trouble.

Thus their married life began under what appeared to her the most promising and congenial circumstances. She soon insisted on having work again, and her busy fingers did much to increase his income.

Alida was not an exacting woman and recognized from the beginning that her husband would naturally have peculiar ways of his own. Unlike Mrs. Mumpson, she never expatiated on "adaptation," but Ostrom soon learned, with much inward relief, that his wife would accept unquestioningly what appeared to be his habits and preferences. He went early to his place of work, taking the nice little lunch which she prepared, and returned in the dusk of the evening when he always found a warm dinner in readiness. After this, he was ready enough to walk with her, but, as before, chose the least-frequented streets. Places of amusement and resort seemed distasteful. On Sundays, he enjoyed a ramble in the country as long as the season permitted, and then showed

a great disinclination to leave the fireside. For a time, he went with her in the evening to church, but gradually persuaded her to remain at home and read or talk to him.

His wife felt that she had little cause to complain of his quiet ways and methodical habits. He had exhibited them before marriage and they were conducive to her absolute sense of proprietorship in him—an assurance so dear to a woman's heart. The pleasures of his home and her society appeared to be all that he craved. At times, she had wondered a little at a certain air of apprehensiveness in his manner when steps were heard upon the stairs, but as the quiet days and weeks passed, such manifestations of nervousness ceased. Occasionally, he would start violently and mutter strange words in his sleep, but nothing disturbed the growing sense of security and satisfaction in Alida's heart. The charm of a regular, quiet life grows upon one who has a nature fitted for it, and this was true to an unusual degree of Alida Ostrom. Her content was also increased by the fact that her husband was able each month to deposit a goodly portion of their united earnings in a savings bank.

Every day, every week, was so like the preceding ones that it seemed as if their happy life might go on forever. She was gladly conscious that there was more than gratitude and good-will in her heart. She now cherished a deep affection for her husband and felt that he had become essential to her life.

"Oh, how happy mother would be if she knew how safe and protected I am," she murmured one March evening, as she was preparing her husband's dinner. "Leaving me alone in the world was far worse to her than dying."

At that very moment a gaunt-looking woman, with a child in her arms, stood in the twilight on the opposite side of the street, looking up at the windows.

CHAPTER VII

FROM HOME TO THE STREET

AS the shadows of the gloomy March evening deepened, Alida lighted the lamp and was then a little surprised to hear a knock at the door. No presentiment of trouble crossed her mind; she merely thought that one of her neighbors on the lower floors had stepped up to borrow something.

"Come in," she cried, as she adjusted the shade of the lamp.

A tall, thin, pale woman entered, carrying a child that was partly hidden by a thin shawl, their only outer protection against the chill winds which had been blustering all day. Alida looked at the stranger inquiringly and kindly, expecting an appeal for charity. The woman sank into a chair as if exhausted, and fixed her dark, hollow eyes on Mrs. Ostrom. She appeared consumed by a terrible curiosity.

Alida wondered at the strange chill of apprehension with which she encountered this gaze. It was so intent, so searching, yet so utterly devoid of a trace of goodwill. She began gently, "Can I do anything for you?"

For a moment or two longer there was no response other than the same cold, questioning scrutiny, as if, instead of a sweet-faced woman, something monstrously unnatural were present. At last, in slow, icy utterance, came the words, "So you are—her."

"Is the woman insane?" thought Alida. "Why else does she look at me so? Oh, that Wilson would come! I'm

sorry for you, my good woman," she began kindly. "You are laboring under some mistake. My husband—"

"Your husband!" exclaimed the stranger, with an indescribable accent of scorn and reproach.

"Yes," replied Alida with quiet dignity. "My husband will be home soon and he will protect me. You have no right to enter my rooms and act as you do. If you are sick and in trouble, I and my husband—"

"Please tell me miss, how he became your husband?"

"By lawful marriage, by my pastor."

"We'll soon see how lawful it was," replied the woman, with a bitter laugh. "I'd like you to tell me how often a man can be married lawfully."

"What do you mean?" cried Alida, with a sudden flash in her blue eyes. Then, as if reproaching herself, she added kindly, "Pardon me. I see you are not well. You do not realize what you are saying or where you are. Take a seat nearer the fire, and when Mr. Ostrom comes from his work he'll take you to your friends."

All the while she was speaking the woman regarded her with a hard, stony gaze; then replied, coldly and decisively, "You are wrong, miss"—how that title grated on Alida's ears!—"I am neither insane nor drunk. I do know what I am saying and where I am. You are playing a bold game or else you have been deceived, and very easily deceived too. They say some women are so eager to be married that they ask no questions, but jump at the first chance. Whether deceived or deceiving, it doesn't matter now. But you and he shall learn that there is a law in the land which will protect an honest woman in her sacred rights. You needn't look so shocked and bewildered. You are not a young, giddy girl if I may judge from your face. What else could you expect when you took up with a stranger you knew nothing about? Do you know that likeness?" and she drew from her bosom a daguerreotype.

Alida waved it away as she said indignantly, "I won't believe ill of my husband. I—"

"No, miss," interrupted the woman, sternly, "you are right for once. You won't indeed believe ill of your husband, but you'll have to believe ill of mine. There's no use of your putting on such airs any longer. No matter how rash and silly you may have been, if you have a spark of honesty you'll be open to proof. If you and he try to brazen it out the law will open both your eyes. Look at that likeness, look at these letters; and I have other proof and witnesses which can't be disputed. The name of the man you are living with is not Wilson Ostrom. His name is Henry Ferguson. I am Mrs. Ferguson, and I have my marriage certificate, and—what! are you going to faint? Well, I can wait till you recover and till he comes," and she coolly sat down again.

Alida had glanced at the proofs which the woman had thrust into her hands, then staggered back to a lounge that stood near. She might have fainted, but at that awful moment she heard a familiar step on the stairs. She was facing the door; the terrible stranger sat at one side, with her back toward it.

When Ostrom entered he first saw Alida looking pale and ill. He hastened toward her exclaiming, "Why, Lida, dear, what is the matter? You are sick!"

Instinctively she sprang to his arms, crying, "Oh, thank God! you've come. Take away this awful woman."

"Yes, Henry Ferguson, it's very proper you should take me away from a place like this."

As the man who had called himself Wilson Ostrom heard that voice he trembled like an aspen; his clasp of Alida relaxed, his arms dropped to his side and, as he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, he groaned, "Lost."

"Found out, you mean," was the woman's reply.

Step by step, with horror-stricken eyes, Alida retreated from the man to whose protection and embrace she had flown. "Then it's true?" she said in a hoarse whisper.

He was speechless.

"You are wilfully blind now, miss, if you don't see it's true," was the stranger's biting comment.

Paying no heed to her, Alida's eyes rested on the man whom she had believed to be her husband. She took an irresolute step toward him. "Speak, Wilson," she cried. "I gave you my whole faith and no one shall destroy it but yourself. Speak, explain, show me that there's some horrible mistake."

"Lida," said the man, lifting his bloodless face, "if you knew all the circumstances—"

"She shall know them!" half shrieked the woman, as if at last stung to fury. "I see that you both hope to get through this affair with a little high tragedy, then escape and come together again in some other hiding place. As for this creature, she can go where she pleases, after hearing the truth; but you, Henry Ferguson, have got to do your duty by me and your child or go to prison.—Let me tell you, miss, that this man was also married to me by a minister. I have my certificate and can produce witnesses. There's one little point you'll do well to consider," she continued, in bitter sarcasm, "he married me first. I suppose you are not so young and innocent as not to know where this fact places you. He courted and won me as other girls are courted and married. He promised me all that he ever promised you. Then, when I lost my rosy cheeks—when I became sick and feeble from child-bearing, he deserted and left me almost penniless. You needn't think you will have to take my word for this. I have proof enough.—And now, Henry Ferguson, I've a few words for you and then you must take your choice. You can't escape. I and my brother have tracked you here. You can't leave these rooms without going to prison. You'd be taken at the very door. But I give you one more chance. If you will promise before God to do your duty by me and your child, I'll forgive as far as a wronged woman can forgive. Neither I nor my brother will take proceedings against you. What this woman will do I don't know. If she prosecutes you, and you are

true to me, I'll stand by you, but I won't stand another false step or a false word from you."

Ferguson had again sunk into his chair, buried his face in his hands and sat trembling and speechless. Never for an instant had Alida taken her eyes from him; and now with a long wailing cry, she exclaimed, "Thank God, thank God! mother's dead."

This was now her best consolation. She rushed into her bedchamber, and a moment later came out, wearing her hat and cloak. Ferguson started up and was about to speak, but she silenced him by a gesture, and her tones were sad and stern as she said, "Mr. Ferguson, from your own manner more truly than from this woman, I learn the truth. You took advantage of my misfortunes, my sorrow and friendlessness to deceive me. You know how false are your wife's words about my eagerness to be deceived and married. But you have nothing to fear from me. I shall not prosecute you, as she suggests, and I charge you before God to do your duty by your wife and child and never to speak to me again." Turning, she hastened toward the door.

"Where are you going?" Ferguson exclaimed, seeking to intercept her.

She waived him off. "I don't know," she replied, "I've no right to be here," and she fled down the stairway and out into the darkness.

The child had not wakened. It was well that it had not looked upon such a scene even in utter ignorance of its meaning.

CHAPTER VIII

HOLCROFT'S VIEW OF MATRIMONY

HOLCROFT was indeed very lonely as he drove through the bare March fields and leafless woods on his way to town. The sky had clouded again, like his prospects, and he had the dreary sense of desolation which overwhelms a quiet, domestic man who feels that his home and all to which he clings is slipping from him. His lot was hard enough at best, and he had a bitter sense of being imposed upon and wronged by Lemuel Weeks. It was now evident enough that the widow and her daughter had been an intolerable burden to his neighbor who had taken advantage of his need and induced him to assume the burden through false representations. To a man of Holcroft's simple, straightforward nature, any phase of trickery was intensely repugnant, and the fact that he had been overreached in a matter relating to his dearest hopes galled him to the quick. He possessed the strong, common sense of his classs; his wife had been like him in this respect and her influence had intensified the trait. Queer people with abnormal manners excited his intense aversion. The most charitable view that he could take of Mrs. Mumpson was that her mind—such as she had—was unbalanced, that it was an impossibility for her to see any subject or duty in a sensible light or its right proportions. Her course, so prejudicial to her own interests, and her incessant and stilted talk, were proof to his mind of a certain degree of insanity, and he had heard that people in this condition often united to their unnatural ways a wonderful degree of cunning. Her child was almost as un-

canny as herself and gave him a shivering sense of discomfort whenever he caught her small, greenish eyes fixed upon him.

"Yet she'll be the only one who'll earn her salt. I don't see how I'm going to stand 'em—I don't, indeed, but suppose I'll have to for three months, or else sell out and clear out."

By the time he reached town, a cold rain had set in. He went at once to the intelligence office, but could obtain no girl for Mrs. Mumpson to "superintend," nor any certain promise of one. He did not much care, for he felt that the new plan was not going to work. Having bartered all his eggs for groceries, he sold the old stove and bought a new one, then drew from the bank a little ready money. Since his butter was so inferior, he took it to his friend Tom Watterly, the keeper of the poorhouse.

Prosperous Tom slapped his old friend on the back and said, "You look awfully glum and chop-fallen, Jim. Come now, don't look at the world as if it was made of tar, pitch, and turpentine. I know your luck's been hard, but you make it a sight harder by being so set in all your ways. You think there's no place to live on God's earth but that old up-and-down-hill farm of yours that I wouldn't take as a gift. Why man alive, there's a dozen things you can turn your hand to; but if you will stay there, do as other men do. Pick out a smart, handy woman that can make butter yaller as gold that'll bring gold, and not such limpsey-slimpsy, ghostly looking stuff as you've brought me. Bein' it's you, I'll take it and give as much for it as I'd pay for better, but you can't run your old ranch in this fashion."

"I know it, Tom," replied Holcroft, ruefully. "I'm all at sea; but, as you say, I'm set in my ways, and I'd rather live on bread and milk and keep my farm than make money anywhere else. I guess I'll have to give it all up, though, and pull out, but it's like rooting up one of the old oaks in the meadow lot. The fact is, Tom, I've been fooled into one of the worst scrapes I've got into yet."

"I see how it is," said Tom, heartily and complacently, "you want a practical, foresighted man to talk straight at you for an hour or two and clear up the fog you're in. You study and brood over little things out there alone until they seem mountains which you can't get over nohow, when, if you'd take one good jump out, they'd be behind you. Now, you've got to stay and take a bite with me, and then we'll light our pipes and untangle this snarl. No backing out. I can do you more good than all the preachin' you ever heard.—Hey, there, Bill," shouting to one of the paupers who was detailed for such work, "take this team to the barn and feed 'em.—Come in, come in, old feller. You'll find that Tom Watterly allus has a snack and a good word for an old crony."

Holcroft was easily persuaded, for he felt the need of cheer, and he looked up to Tom as a very sagacious, practical man. So he said, "Perhaps you can see further into a millstone than I can, and if you can show me a way out of my difficulties you'll be a friend sure enough."

"Why of course I can. Your difficulties are all here and here," touching his bullet head and the region of his heart. "There ain't no great difficulties in fact, but, after you've brooded out there a week or two alone, you think you're caught as fast as if you were in a bear-trap.—Here, Angy," addressing his wife, "I've coaxed Holcroft to take supper with us. You can hurry it up a little, can't you?"

Mrs. Watterly gave their guest a cold, limp hand and a rather frigid welcome. But this did not disconcert him. "It's only her way," he had always thought. "She looks after her husband's interests as mine did for me, and she don't talk him to death."

This thought, in the main, summed up Mrs. Watterly's best traits. She was a commonplace, narrow, selfish woman, whose character is not worth sketching. Tom stood a little in fear of her, and was usually careful not to impose extra tasks, but since she helped him to save and get ahead, he regarded her as a model wife.

Holcroft shared in his opinion and sighed deeply as he sat down to supper. "Ah, Tom," he said, "you're a lucky man. You've got a wife that keeps everything indoors up to the mark, and gives you a chance to attend to your own proper business. That's the way it was with mine. I never knew what a lop-sided, helpless creature a man was until I was left alone. You and I were lucky in getting the women we did, but when my partner left me, she took all the luck with her. That ain't the worst. She took what's more than luck and money and everything. I seemed to lose with her my grit and interest in most things. It'll seem foolishness to you, but I can't take comfort in anything much except working that old farm that I've worked and played on ever since I can remember anything. You're not one of those fools, Tom, that have to learn from their own experience. Take a bit from mine, and be good to your wife while you can. I'd give all I'm worth—I know that ain't much—if I could say some things to my wife and do some things for her that I didn't do."

Holcroft spoke in the simplicity of a full and remorseful heart, but he unconsciously propitiated Mrs. Watterly in no small degree. Indeed, she felt that he had quite repaid her for his entertainment, and the usually taciturn woman seconded his remarks with much emphasis.

"Well now, Angy," said Tom, "if you averaged up husbands in these parts I guess you'd find you were faring rather better than most women-folks. I let you take the bit in your teeth and go your own jog mostly. Now, own up, don't I?"

"That wasn't my meaning exactly, Tom," resumed Holcroft. "You and I could well afford to let our wives take their own jog, for they always jogged steady and faithful and didn't need any urging and guiding. But even a dumb critter likes a good word now and then and a little patting on the back. It doesn't cost us anything and does them a sight of good. But we kind of let the chances slip by and forget about it until like enough it's too late."

"Well," replied Tom, with a deprecatory look at his wife, "Angy don't take to pettin' very much. She thinks it's a kind of foolishness for such middle-aged people as we're getting to be."

"A husband can show his consideration without blarneying," remarked Mrs. Watterly, coldly. "When a man takes on in that way, you may be sure he wants something extra to pay for it."

After a little thought, Holcroft said, "I guess it's a good way to pay for it between husband and wife."

"Look here, Jim, since you're so well up on the matrimonial question, why in thunder don't you marry again? That would settle all your difficulties," and Tom looked at his friend with a sort of wonder that he should hesitate to take this practical, sensible course.

"It's very easy for you to say, 'Why don't you marry again?' If you were in my place you'd see that there are things in the way of marrying for the sake of having a good buttermaker and all that kind of thing."

"Mr. Watterly wouldn't be long in comforting himself," remarked his wife. "His advice to you makes the course he'd take mighty clear."

"Now, Angy," said Tom, reproachfully. "Well," he added, with a grin, "you're forewarned. So you've only to take care of yourself and not give me a chance."

"The trouble is," Holcroft resumed, "I don't see how an honest man is going to comfort himself unless it all comes about in some natural sort of way. I suppose there are people who can marry over and over again, just as easy as they'd roll off a log. It ain't for me to judge 'em, and I don't understand how they do it. You are a very practical man, Tom, but just you put yourself in my shoes and see what you'd do. In the first place, I don't know of a woman in the world that I'd think of marrying. That's saying nothing against the women—there's lots too good for me—but I don't know 'em and I can't go around and hunt 'em up. Even if I could, with my shy, awkward ways, I wouldn't

feel half so nervous starting out on a bear hunt. Here's difficulty right at the beginning. Supposing I found a nice, sensible woman, such as I'd be willing to marry, there isn't one chance in a hundred she'd look at an old fellow like me. Another difficulty: Supposing she would, suppose she looked me square in the eyes and said, 'So you truly want a wife?' what in thunder would I say then? I don't want a wife, I want a housekeeper, a butter-maker, one that would look after my interests as if they were her own; and if I could hire a woman, that would do what I wish, I'd never think of marrying. I can't tell a woman that I love her when I don't. If I went to a minister with a woman I'd be deceiving him, and deceiving her and perjuring myself promiscuously. I married once according to law and gospel, and I was married through and through, and I can't do the thing over again in any way that would seem to me like marrying at all. The idea of me sitting by the fire and wishing that the woman who sat on the t'other side of the stove was my first wife! Yet I couldn't help doing this any more than breathing. Even if there was any chance of my succeeding I can't see anything square or honest in my going out and hunting up a wife as a mere matter of business. I know other people do it and I've thought a good deal about it myself, but when it comes to the point of acting I find I can't do it."

The two men now withdrew from the table to the fireside and lighted their pipes. Mrs. Watterly stepped out for a moment and Tom, looking over his shoulder to make sure she was out of ear-shot, said under his breath, "But suppose you found a woman that you could love and obey, and all that?"

"Oh, of course, that would make everything different. I wouldn't begin with a lie then, and I know enough of my wife to feel sure that she wouldn't be a sort of dog in the manger after she was dead. She was one of those good souls that if she could speak her mind this minute she would say, 'James, what's best and right for you *is* best and right.'

But it's just because she was such a good wife that I know there's no use of trying to put any one in her place. Where on earth could I find anybody, and how could we get acquainted so that we'd know anything about each other? No, I must just scratch along for a short time as things are and be on the lookout to sell or rent."

Tom smoked meditatively for a few moments, and then remarked, "I guess that's your best way out."

"It ain't an easy way, either," said Holcroft. "Finding a purchaser or tenant for a farm like mine is almost as hard as finding a wife. Then, as I feel, leaving my place is next to leaving the world."

Tom shook his head ruefully and admitted, "I declare, Jim, when a feller comes to think it all over, you *are* in a bad fix, especially as you feel. I thought I could talk you over into practical, common-sense in no time. It's easy enough, when one don't know all the bearin's of a case, to think carelessly, 'Oh, he ain't as bad off as he thinks he is. He can do this and that and the t'other thing.' But when you come to look it all over, you find he can't, except at a big loss. Of course, you can give away your farm on which you were doing well and getting ahead, though how you did it, I don't see. You'd have to about give it away if you forced a sale, and where on earth you'll find a tenant who'll pay anything worth considering—but there's no use of croaking. I wish I could help you, old feller. By jocks! I believe I can. There's an old woman here who's right smart and handy when she can't get her bottle filled. I believe she'd be glad to go with you, for she don't like our board and lodging over much."

"Do you think she'd go to-night?"

"Oh, yes, guess so. A little cold water'll be a good change for her."

Mrs. Wiggins was seen, and, feeling that any change would be for the better, readily agreed to go for very moderate wages. Holcroft looked dubiously at the woman's heavy form and heavier face, but felt that it was the best

he could do. Squeezing Mrs. Watterly's cold, limp hand in a way that would have thawed a lump of ice, he said "good-by"; and then declaring that he would rather do his own harnessing for a night ride, he went out into the storm. Tom put on his rubber coat and went to the barn with his friend, toward whom he cherished honest good-will.

"By jocks!" he ejaculated, sympathetically, "but you have hard lines, Jim. What in thunder would I do with two such widdy women to look after my house!"

CHAPTER IX

MRS. MUMPSON ACCEPTS HER MISSION

AS Holcroft drove through the town, Mrs. Wiggins, who, as matters were explained to her, had expressed her views chiefly by affirmative nods, now began to use her tongue with much fluency.

"Hi 'ave a friend 'ereabouts," she said, "an' she's been a keepin' some of my things. Hi'll be be'olden to ye, master, hif ye'll jes stop a bit hat the door whiles hi gets 'em. Hif ye'll hadvance me a dollar or so on me wages hit'll be a long time hafore I trouble ye hagain."

The farmer had received too broad a hint not to know that Mrs. Wiggins was intent on renewing her acquaintance with her worst enemy. He briefly replied, therefore, "It's too late to stop now. I'll be coming down soon again and will get your things."

In vain Mrs. Wiggins expostulated, for he drove steadily on. With a sort of grim humor, he thought of the meeting of the two "widdy women," as Tom had characterized them, and of Mrs. Mumpson's dismay at finding in the "cheap girl" a dame of sixty, weighing not far from two hundred. "If it wasn't such awfully serious business for me," he thought, "it would be better'n going to a theatre to see the two go on. If I haven't got three 'peculiar females' on my hands now, I'd like to hear of the man that has."

When Mrs. Wiggins found she could not gain her point, she subsided into utter silence. It soon became evident in the cloudy light of the moon that she was going to sleep, for

she so nodded and swayed about that the farmer feared she would tumble out of the wagon. She occupied a seat just back of his and filled it, too. The idea of stepping over, sitting beside her and holding her in, was inexpressibly repugnant to him. So he began talking to her, and finally shouting at her, to keep her awake.

His efforts were useless. He glanced with rueful dismay over his shoulder as he thought, "If she falls out, I don't see how on earth I'll ever get her back again."

Fortunately, the seat slipped back a little and she soon slid down into a sort of mountainous heap on the bottom of the wagon, as unmindful of the rain as if it were a lullaby. Now that his mind was at rest about her falling out, and knowing that he had a heavy load, Holcroft let the horses take their own time along the miry highway.

Left to her own devices by Holcroft's absence, Mrs. Mumpson had passed what she regarded as a very eventful afternoon and evening. Not that anything unusual had happened, unless everything she said and did may be looked upon as unusual; but Mrs. Mumpson justly felt that the critical periods of life are those upon which definite courses of action are decided upon. In the secret recesses of her heart—supposing her to possess such an organ—she had partially admitted to herself, even before she had entered Holcroft's door, that she might be persuaded into marrying him; but the inspection of his room, much deliberate thought, and prolonged soliloquy, had convinced her that she ought to "enter into nuptial relations" as her thought formulated itself. It was a trait of Mrs. Mumpson's active mind that when it once entered upon a line of thought it was hurried along from conclusion to conclusion with wonderful rapidity.

While Jane made up Mr. Holcroft's bed, her mother began to inspect, and soon suffered keenly from a very painful discovery. The farmer's meagre wardrobe and other belongings were soon rummaged over, but one large closet and several bureau drawers were locked. "These are the recep-

tercles of the deceased Mrs. Holcroft's affects," she said with compressed lips. "They are mouldering useless away. Moth and rust will enter, while I, the caretaker, am debarred. I should not be debarred. All the things in that closet should be shaken out, aired, and carefully put back. Who knows how useful they may be in the future! Waste is wicked. Indeed, there are few things more wicked than waste. Now I think of it, I have some keys in my trunk."

"He won't like it," interposed Jane.

"In the responserble persition I have assumed," replied Mrs. Mumpson, with dignity, "I must consider, not what he wants, but what is best for him and what may be best for others."

Jane had too much curiosity herself to make further objection and the keys were brought. It was astonishing what a number of keys Mrs. Mumpson possessed, and she was not long in finding those which would open the ordinary locks thought by Holcroft to be ample protection.

"I was right," said Mrs. Mumpson, complacently. "A musty odor exudes from these closed receptercles. Men have no comprehension of the need of such caretakers as I am."

Everything that had ever belonged to poor Mrs. Holcroft was pulled out, taken to the window and examined, Jane following, as usual, in the wake of her mother and putting everything to the same tests which her parent applied. Mrs. Holcroft had been a careful woman, and the extent and substantial character of her wardrobe proved that her husband had not been close in his allowances to her. Mrs. Mumpson's watery-blue eyes grew positively animated as she felt of and held up to the light one thing after another. "Mrs. Holcroft was evidently unnaturally large," she reflected aloud, "but then these things could be made over, and much material be left to repair them, from time to time. The dresses are of sombre colors, becoming to a lady somewhat advanced in years, and of subdued taste."

By the time that the bed and all the chairs in the room

were littered with wearing apparel, Mrs. Mumpson said, "Jane, I desire you to bring the rocking-chair. So many thoughts are crowding upon me that I must sit down and think."

Jane did as requested, but remarked, "The sun is gettin' low, and all these things'll have to be put back just as they was or he'll be awful mad."

"Yes, Jane," replied Mrs. Mumpson abstractedly and rocking gently, "you can put them back. Your mind is not burdened like mine, and you haven't offspring and the future to provide for," and for a wonder, she relapsed into silence. Possibly she possessed barely enough of womanhood to feel that her present train of thought had better be kept to herself. She gradually rocked faster and faster, thus indicating that she was rapidly approaching a conclusion.

Meanwhile, Jane was endeavoring to put things back as they were before and found it no easy task. As the light declined, she was overcome by a sort of panic, and, huddling the things into the drawers as fast as possible, she locked them up. Then, seizing her mother's hand and pulling the abstracted woman to her feet, she cried, "If he comes and finds us here and no supper ready he'll turn us right out into the rain."

Even Mrs. Mumpson felt that she was perhaps reaching conclusions too fast and that some diplomacy might be necessary to consummate her plans. Her views, however, appeared to her so reasonable that she scarcely thought of failure, having the happy faculty of realizing everything in advance whether it ever took place or not.

As she slowly descended the stairs with the rocking-chair, she thought, "Nothing could be more suiterble. We are both about the same age; I am most respecterbly connected —in fact, I regard myself as somewhat his superior in this respect—he is painfully undeveloped and irreligious and thus is in sore need of female influence ; he is lonely and down-hearted, and in woman's voice there is a spell to banish care; worst of all, things are going to waste. I must de-

lib'rately face the great duty with which Providence has brought me face to face. At first, he may be a little blind to this great oppertunity of his life—that I must expect, remembering the influence he was under so many years—but I will be patient, and by the proper use of language, place everything eventually before him in a way that will cause him to yield in glad submission to my views of the duties, the priviliges and the responserbilities of life."

So active was Mrs. Mumpson's mind that this train of thought was complete by the time she had ensconced herself in the rocking-chair by the fireless kitchen stove. Once more Jane seized her hand and dragged her up. "You must help," said the child. "I spect him every minnit and I'm scart half to death to think what he'll do, 'specially if he finds out we've been rummagin'."

"Jane," said Mrs. Mumpson, severely, "that is not a proper way of expressing yourself. I am housekeeper here, and I've been inspecting."

"Shall I tell him you've been inspectin'?" asked the girl, keenly.

"Children of your age should speak when they are spoken to," replied her mother, still more severely. "You cannot comprehend my motives and duties, and I should have to punish you if you passed any remarks upon my actions."

"Well," said Jane, apprehensively, "I only hope we'll soon have a chance to fix up them drawers, for if he should open 'em we'd have to tramp again, and we will anyway if you don't help me get supper."

"You are mistaken, Jane," responded Mrs. Mumpson, with dignity. "We shall not leave this roof for three months and that will give me ample time to open his eyes to his true interests. I will condescend to these menial tasks until he brings a girl who will yield the deference due to my years and station in life."

Between them, after filling the room with smoke, they kindled the kitchen fire. Jane insisted on making the cof-

fee and then helped her mother to prepare the rest of the supper, doing, in fact, the greater part of the work. Then they sat down to wait, and they waited so long that Mrs. Mumpson began to express her disapproval by rocking violently. At last, she said severely, "Jane, we will partake of supper alone."

"I'd ruther wait till he comes."

"It's not proper that we should wait. He is not showing me due respect. Come, do as I command."

Mrs. Mumpson indulged in lofty and aggrieved remarks throughout the meal and then returned to her rocker. At last, her indignant sense of wrong reached such a point that she commanded Jane to clear the table and put away the things.

"I won't," said the child.

"What! will you compel me to chastise you?"

"Well, then, I'll tell him it was all your doin's."

"I shall tell him so myself. I shall remonstrate with him. The idea of his coming home alone at this time of night, with an unknown female!"

"One would think you was his aunt, to hear you talk," remarked the girl, sullenly.

"I am a respecterble woman and most respecterbly connected. My character and antercedents render me irreproachful. This could not be said of a hussy, and a hussy he'll probably bring—some flighty, immerture female that will tax even my patience to train."

Another hour passed and the frown on Mrs. Mumpson's brow grew positively awful. "To think," she muttered, "that a man whom I have deemed it my duty to marry should stay out so and under such peculiar circumstances. He must have a lesson which he can never forget." Then aloud, to Jane, "Kindle a fire on the parlor hearth and let this fire go out. He must find us in the most respecterble room in the house—a room befitting my station."

"I declare, mother, you ain't got no sense at all," exclaimed the child, exasperated beyond measure.

"I'll teach you to use such unrerspectful language," cried Mrs. Mumpson, darting from her chair like a hawk and pouncing upon the unhappy child.

With ears tingling from a cuffing she could not soon forget, Jane lighted the parlor fire and sat down sniffling in the furthest corner.

"There shall be only one mistress in this house," said Mrs. Mumpson, who had now reached the loftiest plane of virtuous indignation, "and its master shall learn that his practices reflect upon even me as well as himself."

At last the sound of horses' feet was heard on the wet, oozy ground without. The irate widow did not rise, but merely indicated her knowledge of Holcroft's arrival by rocking more rapidly.

"Hello there, Jane," he shouted, "bring a light to the kitchen."

"Jane, remain," said Mrs. Mumpson, with an awful look.

Holcroft stumbled through the dark kitchen to the parlor door and looked with surprise at the group before him—Mrs. Mumpson apparently oblivious and rocking as if the chair was possessed, and the child crying in a corner.

"Jane, didn't you hear me call for a light?" he asked a little sharply.

Mrs. Mumpson rose with great dignity and began, "Mr. Holcroft, I wish to remonstrate—"

"Oh, bother, I've brought a woman to help you, and we're both wet through from this driving rain."

"You've brought a strange female at this time of—"

Holcroft's patience gave way, but he only said, quietly, "You had better have a light in the kitchen within two minutes. I warn you both. I also wish some hot coffee."

Mrs. Mumpson had no comprehension of a man who could be so quiet when he was angry, and she believed that she might impress him with a due sense of the enormity of his offence. "Mr. Holcroft, I scarcely feel that I can meet a girl who has no more sense of decorum than to"—but

Jane, striking a match, revealed the fact that she was speaking to empty air.

Mrs. Wiggins was at last so far aroused that she was helped from the wagon and came shivering and dripping toward the kitchen. She stood a moment in the doorway and filled it, blinking confusedly at the light. There was an absence of celerity in all Mrs. Wiggins's movements, and she was therefore slow in the matter of waking up. Her aspect and proportions almost took away Mrs. Mumpson's breath. Here certainly was much to superintend, much more than had been anticipated. Mrs. Wiggins was undoubtedly a "peculiar female," as had been expected, but she was so elderly and monstrous that Mrs. Mumpson felt some embarrassment in her purpose to overwhelm Holcroft with a sense of the impropriety of his conduct.

Mrs. Wiggins took uncertain steps toward the rocking-chair, and almost crushed it as she sat down. "Ye gives a body a cold welcome," she remarked, rubbing her eyes.

Mrs. Mumpson had got out of her way as a minnow would shun a leviathan. "May I ask your name?" she gasped.

"Viggins, Mrs. Viggins."

"Oh, indeed! You are a married woman?"

"No, hi'm a vidder. What's more, hi'm cold, an' drippin', an' 'ungry. Hi might 'a' better staid at the poor-us than come to a place like this."

"What!" almost screamed Mrs. Mumpson, "are you a pauper?"

"Hi tell ye hi'm a vidder, an' good as you be, for hall he said," was the sullen reply.

"To think that a respecterbly connected woman like me"—but for once Mrs. Mumpson found language inadequate. Since Mrs. Wiggins occupied the rocking-chair, she hardly knew what to do and plaintively declared, "I feel as if my whole nervous system was giving way."

"No 'arm 'll be done hif hit does," remarked Mrs. Wiggins, who was not in an amiable mood.

"This from the female I'm to superintend!" gasped the bewildered woman.

Her equanimity was still further disturbed by the entrance of the farmer, who looked at the stove with a heavy frown.

"Why in the name of common-sense isn't there a fire?" he asked, "and supper on the table? Couldn't you hear that it was raining and know we'd want some supper after a long, cold ride?"

"Mr. Holcroft," began the widow, in some trepidation, "I don't approve—such irregular habits—"

"Madam," interrupted Holcroft, sternly, "did I agree to do what you approved of? Your course is so peculiar that I scarcely believe you are in your right mind. You had better go to your room and try to recover your senses. If I can't have things in this house to suit me I'll have no one in it.—Here, Jane, you can help."

Mrs. Mumpson put her handkerchief to her eyes and departed. She felt that this display of emotion would touch Holcroft's feelings when he came to think the scene all over.

Having kindled the fire, he said to Jane, "You and Mrs. Wiggins get some coffee and supper in short order and have it ready when I come in," and he hastened out to care for his horses. If the old woman was slow, she knew just how to make every motion effective, and a good supper was soon ready.

"Why didn't you keep up a fire, Jane?" Holcroft asked.

"She wouldn't let me. She said how you must be taught a lesson," replied the girl, feeling that she must choose between two potentates, and deciding quickly in favor of the farmer. She had been losing faith in her mother's wisdom a long time, and this night's experience had banished the last shred of it.

Some rather bitter words rose to Holcroft's lips, but he restrained them. He felt that he ought not to disparage the mother to the child. As Mrs. Wiggins grew warm, and

imbibed the generous coffee, her demeanor thawed perceptibly and she graciously vouchsafed the remark, "Ven ye're hout late hag'in hi'll look hafter ye."

Mrs. Mumpson had not been so far off as not to hear Jane's explanation, as the poor child found to her cost when she went up to bed.

CHAPTER X

A NIGHT OF TERROR

AS poor, dazed, homeless Alida passed out into the street, after the revelation that she was not a wife and never had been, she heard a voice say, "Well, Hanner wasn't long in bouncing the woman. I guess we'd better go up now. Ferguson will need a lesson that he won't soon forget."

The speaker of these words was Mrs. Ferguson's brother, William Hackman, and his companion was a detective. The wife had laid her still sleeping child down on the lounge and was coolly completing Alida's preparations for dinner. Her husband had sunk back into a chair and again buried his face in his hands. He looked up with startled, blood-shot eyes as his brother-in-law and the stranger entered, and then resumed his former attitude.

Mrs. Ferguson briefly related what had happened and then said, "Take chairs and draw up."

"I don't want any dinner," muttered the husband.

Mr. William Hackman now gave way to his irritation. Turning to his brother he relieved his mind as follows, "See here, Hank Ferguson, if you hadn't the best wife in the land, this gentleman would now be giving you a promenade to jail. I've left my work for weeks, and spent a sight of money to see that my sister got her rights, and by thunder, she's going to have 'em. We've agreed to give you a chance to brace up and be a man. If we find out there isn't any man in you, then you go to prison and hard labor to the

hull extent of the law. We've fixed things so you can't play any more tricks. This man is a private detective. As long as you do the square thing by your wife and child, you'll be let alone. If you try to sneak off, you'll be nabbed. Now if you ain't a scamp down to your heel-taps, get up out of that chair like a man, treat your wife as she deserves for letting you off so easy, and don't make her change her mind by acting as if you, and not her, was the wronged person."

At heart, Ferguson was a weak, cowardly, selfish creature, whose chief aim in life was to have things to suit himself. When they ceased to be agreeable, he was ready for a change, without much regard for the means to his ends. He had always foreseen the possibility of the event which had now taken place, but, like all self-indulgent natures, had hoped that he might escape detection. Alida, moreover, had won a far stronger hold upon him than he had once imagined possible. He was terribly mortified and cast down by the result of his experiment, as he regarded it. But the thought of a prison and hard labor speedily drew his mind away from this aspect of the affair. He had been fairly caught, his lark was over, and he soon resolved that the easiest and safest way out of the scrape was the best way. He therefore raised his head and came forward with a penitent air, as he said, "It's natural I should be overwhelmed with shame at the position in which I find myself. But I see the truth of your words and I'll try to make it all right, as far as I can. I'll go back with you and Hannah to my old home. I've got money in the bank, I'll sell out every thing here, and I'll pay you, William, as far as I can, what you've spent. Hannah is mighty good to let me off so easy and she won't be sorry. This man is witness to what I say," and the detective nodded.

"Why, Ferguson," said Mr. Hackman, effusively, "now you're talking like a man.—Come and kiss him, Hanner, and make it all up."

"That's the way with you men," said the woman, bit-

ways. "These things count for little. Henry Ferguson must prove he's honest in what he says, by deeds, not words. I'll do as I've said if he acts square, and that's enough to start with."

"All right," said Ferguson, glad enough to escape the caress. "I'll do as I say."

He did do all he promised, and very promptly, too. He was not capable of believing that a woman, wronged as Alida had been, would ever prosecute him, and he was eager to escape to another State, and, in a certain measure, again to hide his identity under his own actual name.

Meanwhile, how fared the poor creature who had fled, driven forth by her first wild impulse to escape from a false and terrible position? With every step she took down the dimly-lighted street, the abyss into which she had fallen seemed to grow deeper and darker. She was overwhelmed with the magnitude of her misfortune. She shunned the illumined thoroughfare with a half-crazed sense that every finger would be pointed at her. Her final words, spoken to Ferguson, were the last clear promptings of her womanly nature. After that, everything grew confused, except the impression of remediless disaster and shame. She was incapable of forming any correct judgment concerning her position. The thought of her parents filled her with horror. He, she thought, would take the same view which the woman had so brutally expressed—that in her eagerness to be married she had brought to the parsonage an unknown man and had involved a clergyman in her own scandalous record. It would all be in the papers, and her parents' name mixed up in the affair. She would rather die than subject him to such an ordeal. Long after, when he learned the facts in the case, he looked at her very sadly, as he asked, "Didn't you know me better than that? Had I so failed in my preaching that you couldn't come straight to me?"

She wondered afterward that she had not done this, but she was not capable, on close upon absolute insanity, to do what was wise and safe. She simply yielded to the wild

impulse to escape, to cower, to hide from every human eye, hastening through the darkest, obscurest streets, not caring where. In the confusion of her mind she would retrace her steps, and soon was utterly lost, wandering she knew not whither. As it grew late, casual passers-by looked after her curiously, rough men spoke to her and others jeered. She only hastened on, driven by her desperate trouble like the wild, ragged clouds that were flying across the stormy March sky.

At last, a policeman said gruffly, "You've passed me twice. You can't be roaming the streets at this time of night. Why don't you go home?"

Standing before him and wringing her hands, she moaned, "I have no home!"

"Where did you come from?"

"Oh! I can't tell you. Take me to any place where a woman will be safe."

"I can't take you to any place now but the station-house."

"But can I be alone there? I won't be put with anybody?"

"No, no, of course not. You'll be better off there. Come along. 'Tain't far."

She walked beside him without a word.

"You'd better tell me something of your story. Perhaps I can do more for you in the morning."

"I can't. I'm a stranger. I haven't any friends in town."

"Well, well, the sergeant will see what can be done in the morning. You've been up to some foolishness I suppose, and you'd better tell the whole story to the sergeant."

She soon entered the station-house and was locked up in a narrow cell. She heard the grating of the key in the lock with a sense of relief, feeling that she had at least found a place of temporary refuge and security. A hard board was the only couch it possessed, but the thought of sleep did not enter her mind. Sitting down, she buried her face in her

hands and rocked back and forth in agony and distraction until day dawned. At last, some one—she felt she could not raise her eyes to his face—brought her some breakfast and coffee. She drank the latter, but left the food untasted. Finally, she was led to the sergeant's private room and told that she must give an account of herself. "If you can't or won't tell a clear story," the officer threatened, "you'll have to go before the justice in open court, and he may commit you to prison. If you'll tell the truth now, it may be that I can discharge you. You had no business to be wandering about the streets like a vagrant or worse; but it you were a stranger or lost and hadn't sense enough to go where you'd be cared for, I can let you go."

"Oh!" said Alida, again wringing her hands and looking at the officer with eyes so full of misery and fear that he began to soften, "I don't know where to go."

"Haven't you a friend or acquaintance in town?"

"Not one that I can go to!"

"Why don't you tell me your story? Then I'll know what to do, and perhaps can help you. You don't look like a depraved woman."

"I'm not. God knows I'm not."

"Well, my poor woman, I've got to act in view of what I know, not what God knows."

"If I tell my story, will I have to give names?"

"No, not necessarily. It would be best though."

"I can't do that, but I'll tell you the truth. I will swear it on the Bible. I married some one. A good minister married us. The man deceived me. He was already married, and last night his wife came to my happy home and proved before the man whom I thought my husband that I was no wife at all. He couldn't, didn't deny it. Oh! oh! oh!" and she again rocked back and forth in uncontrollable anguish. "That's all," she added brokenly. "I had no right to be near him or her any longer and I rushed out. I don't remember much more. My brain seemed on fire. I just walked and walked till I was brought here."

"Well, well," said the sergeant, sympathetically, "you have been treated badly, outrageously, but you are not to blame unless you married the man hastily and foolishly."

"That's what every one will think, but it don't seem to me that I did. It's a long story, and I can't tell it."

"But you ought to tell it, my poor woman. You ought to sue the man for damages and send him to State prison."

"No, no," cried Alida, passionately. "I don't want to see him again and I won't go to a court before people unless I am dragged there."

The sergeant looked up at the policeman who had arrested her and said, "This story is not contrary to anything you saw?"

"No, sir, she was wandering about and seemed half out of her mind."

"Well, then, I can let you go."

"But I don't know where to go," she replied, looking at him with hunted, hollow eyes. "I feel as if I were going to be sick. Please don't turn me into the streets. I'd rather go back to the cell."

"That won't answer. There's no place that I can send you to except the poorhouse. Haven't you any money?"

"No, sir. I just rushed away and left everything when I learned the truth."

"Tom Watterly's hotel is the only place for her," said the policeman, with a nod.

"Oh, I can't go to a hotel."

"He means the almshouse," explained the sergeant. "What is your name?"

"Alida—that's all now. Yes, I'm a pauper and I can't work just yet. I'll be safe there, won't I?"

"Certainly, safe as if in your mother's house."

"Oh, mother, mother; thank God, you are dead."

"Well, I *am* sorry for you," said the sergeant, kindly. "'Taint often we have so sad a case as yours. If you say so, I'll send for Tom Watterly, and he and his wife will take charge of you. After a few days, your mind will get quieter

and clearer, and then you'll prosecute the man who wronged you."

"I'll go to the poorhouse until I can do better," she replied wearily. "Now, if you please, I'll return to my cell, where I can be alone."

"Oh, we can give you a better room than that," said the sergeant. "Show her into the waiting-room, Tim. If you prosecute, we can help you with our testimony. Good-by, and may you have better days!"

Watterly was telegraphed to come down with a conveyance, for the almshouse was in a suburb. In due time he appeared, and was briefly told Alida's story. He swore a little at the "mean cuss," the author of all the trouble, and then took the stricken woman to what all his acquaintances facetiously termed his "hotel."

CHAPTER XI

BAFFLED

IN the general consciousness, Nature is regarded as feminine, and even those who love her most will have to adopt Mrs. Mumpson's oft-expressed opinion of the sex, and admit that she is sometimes a "peculiar female." During the month of March, in which our story opens, there was scarcely any limit to her varying moods. It would almost appear that she was taking a mysterious interest in Holcroft's affairs; but whether it was a kindly interest or not, one might be at a loss to decide. When she caught him away from house, she pelted him with the coldest of rain and made his house, with even Mrs. Mumpson and Jane abiding there, seem a refuge. In the morning after the day on which he had brought, or in a sense had carted Mrs. Wiggins to his domicile, Nature was evidently bent on instituting contrasts between herself and the rival phases of femininity with which the farmer was compelled to associate. It may have been that she had another motive and was determined to keep her humble worshipper at her feet, and to render it impossible for him to make the changes toward which he had felt himself driven.

Being an early riser, he was up with the sun, and the sun rose so serenely and smiled so benignly that Holcroft's clouded brow cleared in spite of all that had happened or could take place. The rain which had brought such discomfort the night before had settled the ground and made it comparatively firm to his tread. The southern breeze which fanned his cheek was as soft as the air of May. He

remembered that it was Sunday and that beyond feeding his stock and milking he would have nothing to do. He exulted in the unusual mildness and thought, with an immense sense of relief, "I can stay out doors nearly all day." He resolved to let his help kindle the fire and get breakfast as they could, and to keep out of their way. Whatever changes the future might bring, he would have one more long day in rambling about his fields and in thinking over the past. Feeling that there need be no haste about anything, he leisurely inhaled the air, fragrant from springing grass, and listened with a vague, undefined pleasure to the ecstatic music of the bluebirds, song-sparrows and robins. If any one had asked him why he liked to hear them he would have replied, "I'm used to 'em. When they come I know that plowing and planting time is near."

It must be admitted that Holcroft's enjoyment of spring was not very far removed from that of the stock in his barnyard. All the animal creation rejoices in the returning sun and warmth. A subtle, powerful influence sets the blood in more rapid motion, kindles new desires and awakens a glad expectancy. All that is alive becomes more thoroughly alive and existence in itself is a pleasure. Spring had always brought to the farmer quickened pulses, renewed activity and hopefulness, and he was pleased to find that he was not so old and cast down that its former influence had spent itself. Indeed, it seemed that never before had his fields, his stock and outdoor work—and these comprised Nature to him—been so attractive. They remained unchanged, amid the sad changes which had clouded his life, and his heart clung more tenaciously than ever to old scenes and occupations. They might not bring him happiness again, but he instinctively felt that they might insure a comfort and peace with which he could be content.

At last, he went to the barn and began his work, doing everything slowly, and getting all the solace he could from the tasks. The horses whinnied their welcome and he rubbed their noses caressingly as he fed them. The cows came

briskly to the rack in which he foddered them in pleasant weather, and when he scratched them between the horns they turned their mild, Juno-like eyes upon him with undisguised affection. The chickens, clamoring for their breakfast, followed so closely that he had to be careful where he stepped. Although he knew that all this goodwill was based chiefly on the hope of food and the remembrance of it in the past, nevertheless it soothed and pleased him. He was in sympathy with this homely life; it belonged to him and was dependent on him; it made him honest returns for his care. Moreover, it was agreeably linked with the past. There were quiet cows which his wife had milked, clucking biddies which she had lifted from nests with their downy broods. He looked at them wistfully, and was wondering if they ever missed the presence that he regretted so deeply, when he became conscious that Jane's eyes were upon him. How long she had been watching him, he did not know, but she merely said, "Breakfast's ready," and disappeared.

With a sigh he went to his room to perform his ablutions, remembering with a slight pang how his wife always had a basin and towel ready for him in the kitchen. In the breaking up of just such homely customs, he was continually reminded of his loss.

On awakening to the light of this Sabbath morning, Mrs. Mumpson had thought deeply and reasoned everything out again. She felt that it must be an eventful day and that there was much to be accomplished. In the first place, there was Mrs. Wiggins. She disapproved of her decidedly. "She isn't the sort of person that I would prefer to superintend," she remarked to Jane while making a toilet which she deemed befitting the day, "and the hour will assurdly come when Mr. Holcroft will look upon her in the light that I do. He will eventually realize that I cannot be brought in such close relationship with a pauper. Not that the relationship is exactly close, but then I shall have to speak to her—in brief, to superintend her. My eyes will be offended by her vast proportions and uncouth appearance. The floor creaks

beneath her tread and affects my nerves seriously. Of course, while she is here, I shall zealously, as befits one in my responserble position, try to render useful such service as she can perform. But then, the fact that I disapprove of her must soon become evident. When it is discovered that I only tolerate her, there will be a change. I cannot show my disapproval very strongly to-day, for this is a day set apart for sacred things, and Mrs. Viggins, as she called herself—I cannot imagine a Mr. Viggins, for no man in his senses could have married such a creature—as I was saying, Mrs. Viggins is not at all sacred and I must endeavor to abstract my mind from her till to-morrow, as far as posserble. My first duty to-day is to induce Mr. Holcroft to take us to church. It will give the people of Oakville such a pleasing impression to see us driving to church. Of course, I may fail. Mr. Holcroft is evidently a hardened man. All the influences of his life have been adverse to spiritual development, and it may require some weeks of my influence to soften him and awaken yearnings for what he has not yet known."

"He may be yearnin' for breakfast," Jane remarked, completing her toilet by tying her little pigtail braid with something that had once been a bit of black ribbon, but was now a string. "You'd better come down soon and help."

"If Mrs. Viggins cannot get breakfast, I would like to know what she is here for," continued Mrs. Mumpson, loftily and regardless of Jane's departure. "I shall decline to do menial work any longer, especially on this sacred day, and after I have made my toilet for church. Mr. Holcroft has had time to think. My disapproval was manifest last night and it has undoubtedly occurred to him that he has not conformed to the proprieties of life. Indeed, I almost fear I shall have to teach him what the proprieties of life are. He witnessed my emotion when he spoke as he should not have spoken to *me*. But I must make allowances for his unregenerate state. He was cold, and wet, and hungry last night, and men are unreasonerble at such times. I shall now

heap coals of fire upon his head. I shall show that I am a meek, forgiving Christian woman, and he will relent, soften, and become penitent. Then will be my opportunity," and she descended to the arena which should witness her efforts.

During the period in which Mrs. Mumpson had indulged in these lofty reflections and self-communings, Mrs. Wiggins had also arisen. I am not sure whether she had thought of anything in particular or not. She may have had some spiritual longings which were not becoming to any day of the week. Being a woman of deeds, rather than of thought, probably not much else occurred to her beyond the duty of kindling the fire and getting breakfast. Jane came down, and offered to assist, but was cleared out with no more scruple than if Mrs. Wiggins had been one of the much-visited relatives.

"The hidee," she grumbled, "of 'avin' sich a little trollop round hunder my feet!"

Jane therefore solaced herself by watching the "cheap girl" till her mother appeared.

Mrs. Mumpson sailed majestically in and took the rocking-chair, mentally thankful that it had survived the crushing weight imposed upon it the evening before. Mrs. Wiggins did not drop a courtesy. Indeed, not a sign of recognition passed over her vast, immobile face. Mrs. Mumpson was a little embarrassed. "I hardly know how to comport myself toward that female," she thought. "She is utterly uncouth. Her manners are unmistakerbly those of a pauper. I think I will ignore her to-day. I do not wish my feelings ruffled or put out of harmony with the sacred duties and motives which actuate me."

Mrs. Mumpson therefore rocked gently, solemnly, and strange to say, silently, and Mrs. Wiggins also proceeded with her duties, but not in silence, for everything in the room trembled and clattered at her tread. Suddenly, she turned on Jane and said, " 'Ere, you little baggage, go and tell the master breakfast's ready."

Mrs. Mumpson sprang from her chair, and with a voice

choked with indignation, gasped, "Do you dare address my offspring thus?"

"Ye're vat?"

"My child, my daughter, who is not a pauper, but the offspring of a most respecterble woman and respecterbly connected. I'm amazed, I'm dumbfoundered, I'm—"

"Ye're a bit daft, hi'm a thinkin'." Then to Jane, "Vy don't ye go an' hearn ye're salt?"

"Jane, I forbid—" but it had not taken Jane half a minute to decide between the now jarring domestic powers, and henceforth she would be at Mrs. Wiggins's beck and call. "She can do somethin'," the child muttered, as she stole upon Holcroft.

Mrs. Mumpson sank back in her chair, but her mode of rocking betokened a perturbed spirit. "I will restrain myself till to-morrow and then—" She shook her head portentously and waited till the farmer appeared, feeling assured that Mrs. Wiggins would soon be taught to recognize her station. When breakfast was on the table she darted to her place behind the coffee-pot, for she felt that there was no telling what this awful Mrs. Wiggins might not assume during this day of sacred restraint. But the ex-pauper had no thought of presumption in her master's presence, and the rocking-chair again distracted Mrs. Mumpson's nerves as it creaked under an unwonted weight.

Holcroft took his seat in silence. The widow again bowed her head devoutly, and sighed deeply when observing that the farmer ignored her suggestion.

"I trust that you feel refreshed after your repose," she said benignly.

"I do."

"It is a lovely morning—a morning, I may add, befitting the sacred day. Nature is at peace, and suggests that we and all should be at peace."

"There's nothing I like more, Mrs. Mumpson, unless it is quiet."

"I feel that way, myself. You don't know what restraint

I have put upon myself that the sacred quiet of this day might not be disturbed. I have had strong provercation since I entered this apartment. I will forbear to speak of it till to-morrow, in order that there may be quietness and that our minds may be prepared for worship. I feel that it would be unseemly for us to enter a house of worship with thoughts of strife in our souls. At precisely what moment do you wish me to be ready for church?"

"I am not going to church, Mrs. Mumpson."

"Not going to church! I—I—scarcely understand, Worship is such a sacred duty—"

"You and Jane certainly have a right to go to church, and since it is your wish, I'll take you down to Lemuel Weeks's and you can go with them."

"I don't want to go to cousin Lemuel's, nor to church, nuther," Jane protested.

"Why, Mr. Holcroft," began the widow, sweetly, "after you've once harnessed up it will take but a little longer to keep on to the meeting-house. It would appear so seemly for us to drive thither, as a matter of course. It would be what the communerty expects of us. This is not our day, that we should spend it carnally. We should be spiritually minded. We should put away things of earth. Thoughts of business and any unnecessary toil should be abhorrent. I have often thought that there was too much milking done on Sunday among farmers. I know they say it is essential, but they all seem so prone to forget that but one thing is needful. I feel it borne in upon my mind, Mr. Holcroft, that I should plead with you to attend divine worship and seek an uplifting of your thoughts. You have no idea how differently the day may end, or what emotions may be aroused if you place yourself under the droppings of the sanctuary."

"I'm like Jane, I don't wish to go," said Mr. Holcroft, nervously.

"But, my dear Mr. Holcroft"—the farmer fidgeted under this address—"the very essence of true religion is to do what we don't wish to do. We are to mortify the flesh and thwart

the carnal mind. The more thorny the path of self-denial is, the more certain it's the right path. I've already entered upon it," she continued, turning a momentary glare upon Mrs. Wiggins. "Never before was a respecterble woman so harrowed and outraged; but I am calm; I am endeavoring to maintain a frame of mind suiterble to worship, and I feel it my bounden duty to impress upon you that worship is a necessity to every human being. My conscience would not acquit me if I did not use all my influence—"

"Very well, Mrs. Mumpson, you and your conscience are quits. You have used all your influence. I will do as I said—take you to Lemuel Weeks's and you can go to church with his family," and he rose from the table.

"But cousin Lemuel is also painfully blind to his spiritual interests—"

Holcroft did not stay to listen and was soon engaged in the morning milking. Jane flatly declared that she would not go to cousin Lemuel's or to church. "It don't do me no good, nor you, nuther," she sullenly declared to her mother.

Mrs. Mumpson now resolved upon a different line of tactics. Assuming a lofty, spiritual air, she commanded Jane to light a fire in the parlor and retire thither with the rocking-chair. The elder widow looked after her and ejaculated, "Vell, hif she hain't the craziest loon hi hever 'eard talk. Hif she vas blind she might 'a' seen that the master didn't vant hany sich lecturin' clack."

Having kindled the fire, the child was about to leave the room when her mother interposed and said, solemnly, "Jane, sit down and keep Sunday."

"I'm goin' to help Mrs. Wiggins, if she'll let me."

"You will not so demean yourself. I wish you to have no relations whatever with that female in the kitchen. If you had proper self-respect you would never speak to her again."

"We ain't visitin' here. If I can't work indoors I'll tell him I'll work outdoors."

"It's not proper for you to work to-day. I want you to sit there in the corner and learn the Fifth Commandment."

"Ain't you goin' to cousin Lemuel's?"

"On mature reflection, I have decided to remain at home."

"I thought you would if you had any sense left. You know well enough we ain't wanted down there. I'll go tell him not to hitch up."

"Well, I will permit you to do so. Then return to your Sunday task."

"I'm goin' to mind him," responded the child. She passed rapidly and apprehensively through the kitchen, but paused on the doorstep to make some overtures to Mrs. Wiggins. If that austere dame was not to be propitiated, a line of retreat was open to the barn. "Say," she began, to attract attention.

"Vell, young-un," replied Mrs. Wiggins, rendered more pacific by her breakfast.

"Don't you want me to wash up the dishes and put 'em away? I know how."

"Hi'll try ye. Hif ye breaks hanythink"—and the old woman nodded volumes at the child.

"I'll be back in a minute," said Jane. A moment later she met Holcroft carrying two pails of milk from the barnyard. He was about to pass without noticing her, but she again secured attention by her usual preface, "say," when she had a somewhat extended communication to make.

"Come to the dairy-room, Jane, and say your say there," said Holcroft, not unkindly.

"She ain't goin' to cousin Lemuel's," said the girl, from the door.

"What is she going to do."

"Rock in the parlor. Say, can't I help Mrs. Wiggins wash up the dishes and do the work?"

"Certainly; why not?"

"Mother says I must sit in the parlor 'n' learn Commandments 'n' keep Sunday."

"Well, Jane, which do you think you ought to do?"

"I think, I oughter work, and if you and Mrs. Wiggins will let me, I will work in spite of mother."

"I think that you and your mother both should help do the necessary work to-day. There won't be much."

"If I try and help Mrs. Wiggins mother'll bounce out at me. She shook me last night after I went upstairs, and she boxed my ears 'cause I wanted to keep the kitchen fire up last night."

"I'll go with you to the kitchen and tell Mrs. Wiggins to let you help, and I won't let your mother punish you again unless you do wrong."

Mrs. Wiggins, relying on Jane's promise of help, had sat down to the solace of her pipe for a few minutes, but was about to thrust it hastily away on seeing Holcroft. He reassured her by saying, good-naturedly, "No need of that, my good woman. Sit still and enjoy your pipe. I like to smoke myself. Jane will help clear away things and I wish her to. You'll find she's quite handy. By the way, have you all the tobacco you want?"

"Vell, now, master, p'raps ye know the 'lowance down hat the poor-us vasn't sich as ud keep a body in vat ye'd call satisfyin' smokin'. Hi never 'ad henough ter keep down the 'ankerin'."

"I suppose that's so. You shall have half of my stock, and when I go to town again, I'll get you a good supply. I guess I'll light my pipe, too, before starting for a walk."

"Bless yer 'art, master, ye makes a body comf'terble. Ven hi smokes hi feels more hat 'ome and kind o' contented like. And hold 'ooman like me haint got much left to comfort 'er but 'er pipe."

"Jane," called Mrs. Mumpson sharply from the parlor. As there was no answer, the widow soon appeared in the kitchen door. Smoking was one of the unpardonable sins in Mrs. Mumpson's eyes; and when she saw Mrs. Wiggins puffing comfortably away and Holcroft lighting his pipe, while Jane cleared the table, language almost failed her.

She managed to articulate, "Jane, this atmosphere is not fit for you to breathe, on this sacred day. I wish you to share my seclusion."

"Mrs. Mumpson, I have told her to help Mrs. Wiggins in the necessary work," Holcroft interposed.

"Mr. Holcroft, you don't realize—men never do—Jane is my offspring, and—"

"Oh, if you put it that way, I shan't interfere between mother and child. But I suppose you and Jane came here to work."

"If you will enter the parlor. I will explain to you fully my views, and—"

"Oh, please excuse me," said Holcroft, hastily passing out, "I was just starting for a walk.—I'm bound to have one more day to myself on the old place," he muttered, as he bent his steps toward an upland pasture.

Jane, seeing that her mother was about to pounce upon her, ran behind Mrs. Wiggins, who slowly rose and began a progress toward the irate widow, remarking as she did so, "Hi'll just shut the door 'twixt ye and ye're hoffspring, and then ye kin say ye're prayers hon the tother side."

Mrs. Mumpson was so overcome at the turn affairs had taken on this day which was to witness such progress in her plans and hopes, as to feel the absolute necessity of a prolonged season of thought and soliloquy, and she relapsed without protest into the rocking-chair.

CHAPTER XII

JANE

HOLCROFT was not long in climbing to a sunny nook whence he could see not only his farm and dwelling, but also the Oakville valley, and the little white spire of the distant meeting-house. He looked at this last-named object wistfully and very sadly. Mrs. Mumpson's tirade about worship had been without effect, but the memories suggested by the church were bitter-sweet indeed. It belonged to the Methodist denomination, and Holcroft had been taken, or had gone thither, from the time of his earliest recollection. He saw himself sitting between his father and mother, a round-faced urchin to whom the sermon was unintelligible, but to whom little Bessie Jones in the next pew was a fact, not only intelligible, but very interesting. She would turn around and stare at him until he smiled, then she would giggle until her mother brought her right-about-face with considerable emphasis. After this, he saw the little boy—could it have been himself?—nodding, swaying, and finally slumbering peacefully, with his head on his mother's lap, until shaken into sufficient consciousness to be half dragged, half led, to the door. Once in the big, springless farm wagon he was himself again, looking eagerly around to catch another glimpse of Bessie Jones. Then, he was a big, irreverent boy, shyly and awkwardly bent on mischief in the same old meeting-house. Bessie Jones no longer turned and stared at him, but he exultingly discovered that he could still make her giggle on the sly. Years passed, and Bessie

was his occasional choice for a sleigh-ride when the long body of some farm wagon was placed on runners, and boys and girls—young men and women, they almost thought themselves—were packed in like sardines. Something like self-reproach smote Holcroft even now, remembering how he had allowed his fancy much latitude at this period, paying attention to more than one girl besides Bessie, and painfully undecided which he liked best.

Then had come the memorable year which had opened with a protracted meeting. He and Bessie Jones had passed under conviction at the same time, and on the same evening had gone forward to the anxious seat. From the way in which she sobbed, one might have supposed that the good, simple-hearted girl had terrible burdens on her conscience; but she soon found hope, and her tears gave place to smiles. Holcroft, on the contrary, was terribly cast down and unable to find relief. He felt that he had much more to answer for than Bessie; he accused himself of having been a rather coarse, vulgar boy; he had made fun of sacred things in that meeting-house more times than he liked to think of, and now for some reason could think of nothing else. He could not shed tears, or get up much emotion; neither could he rid himself of the dull weight at heart. The minister, the brethren and sisters, prayed for him and over him, but nothing removed his terrible inertia. He became a familiar form on the anxious seat, for there was a dogged persistence in his nature which prevented him from giving up; but at the close of each meeting he went home in a state of deeper dejection. Sometimes, in returning, he was Bessie Jones's escort, and her happiness added to his gall and bitterness. One moonlight night, they stopped under the shadow of a pine near her father's door, and talked over the matter a few moments before parting. Bessie was full of sympathy which she hardly knew how to express. Unconsciously, in her earnestness—how well he remembered the act!—she laid her hand on his arm as she said, "James, I guess I know what's the trouble with you. In all your seeking, you are thinking only of

yourself—how bad you've been, and all that. I wouldn't think of myself and what I was any more, if I was you. You ain't so awful bad, James, that I'd turn a cold shoulder to you; but you might think I was doing just that if you staid away from me and kept saying to yourself, 'I ain't fit to speak to Bessie Jones'."

Her face had looked sweet and compassionate, and her touch upon his arm had conveyed the subtile magic of sympathy. Under her homely logic, the truth had burst upon him like sunshine. In brief, he had turned from his own shadow and was in the light. He remembered how in his deep feeling he had bowed his head on her shoulder and murmured, "O Bessie, Heaven bless you! I see it all."

He no longer went to the anxious seat. With this young girl, and many others, he was taken into the church on probation. Thereafter, his fancy never wandered again, and there was no other girl in Oakville for him but Bessie. In due time, he had gone with her to yonder meeting-house to be married. It had all seemed to come about as a matter of course. He scarcely knew when he became formally engaged. They "kept company" together steadfastly for a suitable period, and that seemed to settle it in their own and everybody else's mind.

There had been no change in Bessie's quiet, constant soul. After her words under the shadow of the pine tree she seemed to find it difficult to speak of religious subjects, even to her husband; but her simple faith had been unwavering, and she had entered into rest without fear or misgiving.

Not so her husband. He had his spiritual ups and downs, but, like herself, was reticent. While she lived, only a heavy storm kept them from "going to meeting," but with Holcroft, worship was often little more than a form, his mind being on the farm and its interests. Parents and relatives had died, and the habit of seclusion from neighborhood and church life had grown upon them gradually and almost unconsciously.

For a long time after his wife's death, Holcroft had felt

that he did not wish to see any one who would make references to his loss. He shrunk from formal condolences as he would from the touch of a diseased nerve. When the minister called, he listened politely but silently to a general exhortation; then muttered, when left alone, "It's all as he says, I suppose; but somehow his words are like the medicines Bessie took—they don't do any good."

He kept up the form of his faith and a certain vague hope until the night on which he drove forth the Irish revellers from his home. In remembrance of his rage and profanity on that occasion, he silently and in dreary misgiving concluded that he should not, even to himself, keep up the pretence of religion any longer. "I've fallen from grace—that is, if I ever had any"—was a thought which did much to rob him of courage to meet his other trials. Whenever he dwelt on these subjects, doubts, perplexities and resentment at his misfortunes so thronged his mind that he was appalled; so he strove to occupy himself with the immediate present.

To-day, however, in recalling the past, his thoughts would question the future and the outcome of his experiences. In accordance with his simple, downright nature, he muttered, "I might as well face the truth and have done with it. I don't know whether I'll ever see my wife again or not; I don't know whether God is for me or against me. Sometimes, I half think there isn't any God. I don't know what will become of me when I die. I'm sure of only one thing —while I do live I could take comfort in working the old place."

In brief, without ever having heard of the term, he was an agnostic, but not one of the self-complacent, superior type who fancy that they have developed themselves beyond the trammels of faith and are ever ready to make the world aware of their progress.

At last, he recognized that his long revery was leading to despondency and weakness; he rose, shook himself half angrily, and strode toward the house. "I'm here, and here I'm going to stay," he growled. "As long as I'm on my

own land, it's nobody's business what I am or how I feel. If I can't get decent, sensible women help, I'll close up my dairy and live here alone. I certainly can make enough to support myself."

Jane met him with a summons to dinner, looking apprehensively at his stern, gloomy face. Mrs. Mumpson did not appear. "Call her," he said curtly.

The literal Jane returned from the parlor and said, unsympathetically, "She's got a hank'chif to her eyes and says she don't want no dinner."

"Very well," he replied, much relieved.

Apparently he did not want much dinner, either, for he soon started out again. Mrs. Wiggins was not utterly wanting in the intuitions of her sex, and said nothing to break in upon her master's abstraction.

In the afternoon, Holcroft visited every nook and corner of his farm, laying out, he hoped, so much occupation for both hands and thoughts as to render him proof against domestic tribulations.

He had not been gone long before Mrs. Mumpson called in a plaintive voice, "Jane."

The child entered the parlor warily, keeping open a line of retreat to the door. "You need not fear me," said her mother, rocking pathetically. "My feelings are so hurt and crushed that I can only bemoan the wrongs from which I suffer. You little know, Jane, you little know a mother's heart."

"No," assented Jane, "I dunno nothin' about it."

"What wonder, then, that I weep, when my child is so unnatural!"

"I dunno how to be anything else but what I be," replied the girl in self-defence.

"If you would only yield more to my guidance and influence, Jane, the future might be brighter for us both. If you had but stored up the Fifth Commandment in memory—but I forbear. You cannot so far forget your duty as not to tell me how *he* behaved at dinner."

"He looked awful glum, and hardly said a word."

"Ah-h!" exclaimed the widow, "the spell is working."

"If you ain't a workin' to-morrow, there'll be a worse spell," the girl remarked.

"That will do, Jane, that will do. You little understand —how should you? Please keep an eye on him and let me know how he looks and what he is doing and whether his face still wears a gloomy or a penitent aspect. Do as I bid you, Jane, and you may unconsciously secure your own well-being by obedience."

Watching any one was a far more congenial task to the child than learning the Commandments, and she hastened to comply. Moreover, she had the strongest curiosity in regard to Holcroft herself. She felt that he was the arbiter of her fate. So untaught was she, that delicacy and tact were unknown qualities. Her one hope of pleasing was in work. She had no power of guessing that sly espionage would counterbalance such service. Another round of visiting was dreaded above all things; she was therefore exceedingly anxious about the future. "Mother may be right," she thought. "P'raps she can make him marry her, so we needn't go away any more. P'raps she's taken the right way to bring a man around and get him hooked, as cousin Lemuel said. If I was goin' to hook a man though, I'd try another plan than mother's. I'd keep my mouth shut and my eyes open. I'd see what he wanted and do it, even 'fore he spoke. 'Fi's big annuf I bet I could hook a man quicker'n she can by usin her tongue 'stead of her hands."

Jane's scheme was not so bad a one but that it might be tried to advantage by those so disposed. Her matrimonial prospects, however, being still far in the future, it behooved her to make her present existence as tolerable as possible. She knew how much depended on Holcroft and was unaware of any other method of learning his purposes except that of watching him. Both fearing and fascinated, she dogged his steps most of the afternoon, but saw nothing to confirm her mother's view that any spell was working. She scarcely un-

derstood why he looked so long at field, thicket, and woods, as if he saw something invisible to her.

In planning future work and improvements, the farmer had attained a quieter and more genial frame of mind. When, therefore, he sat down and in glancing about saw Jane crouching behind a low hemlock, he was more amused than irritated. He had dwelt on his own interests so long that he was ready to consider even Jane's for a while. "Poor child!" he thought, "she doesn't know any better and perhaps has even been taught to do such things. I think I'll surprise her and draw her out a little.

"Jane, come here," he called.

The girl sprang to her feet, and hesitated whether to fly or obey. "Don't be afraid," added Holcroft. "I won't scold you. Come."

She stole toward him like some small, wild, fearful animal in doubt of its reception. "Sit down there on that rock," he said.

She obeyed with a sly, sidelong look, and he saw that she kept her feet gathered under her so as to spring away if he made the slightest hostile movement.

"Jane, do you think it's right to watch people so?" he asked gravely.

"She told me to."

"Your mother?"

The girl nodded.

"But do you think it's right yourself?"

"Dunno. 'Taint best if you get caught."

"Well, Jane," said Holcroft, with something like a smile lurking in his deepset eyes, "I don't think it's right at all. I don't want you to watch me any more, no matter who tells you to. Will you promise not to?"

The child nodded. She seemed averse to speaking when a sign would answer.

"Can I go now?" she asked after a moment.

"Not yet. I want to ask you some questions. Was any one ever kind to you?"

"I dunno. I suppose so."

"What would you call being kind to you?"

"Not scoldin' or cuffin' me."

"If I didn't scold or strike you, would you think I was kind, then?"

She nodded; but after a moment's thought, said, "And if you didn't look as if you hated to see me round."

"Do you think I've been kind to you?"

"Kinder'n anybody else. You sorter look at me sometimes as if I was a rat. I don't s'pose you can help it and I don't mind. I'd ruther stay here and work than go a visitin' again. Why can't I work outdoors when there's nothin' for me to do in the house?"

"Are you willing to work—to do anything you can?"

Jane was not sufficiently politic to enlarge on her desire for honest toil and honest bread; she merely nodded. Holcroft smiled as he asked, "Why are you so anxious to work?"

"'Cause I won't feel like a stray cat in the house then. I want to be some'ers where I've a right to be."

"Wouldn't they let you work down at Lemuel Weeks's?"

She shook her head.

"Why not?" he asked.

"They said I wasn't honest; they said they couldn't trust me with things, 'cause when I was hungry I took things to eat."

"Was that the way you were treated at other places?"

"Mostly."

"Jane," asked Holcroft, very kindly, "did any one ever kiss you?"

"Mother used to 'fore people. It allus made me kinder sick."

Holcroft shook his head, as if this child was a problem beyond him, and for a time they sat together in silence. At last, he rose and said, "It's time to go home. Now, Jane, don't follow me; walk openly at my side, and when you come to call me at any time, come openly, make a noise, whistle or sing as a child ought. As long as you are with

me, never do anything on the sly and we'll get along well enough."

She nodded and walked beside him. At last, as if emboldened by his words, she broke out, "Say, if mother married you, you couldn't send us away, could you?"

"Why do you ask such a question?" said Holcroft, frowning.

"I was thinkin'—"

"Well," he interrupted, sternly, "never think or speak of such things again."

The child had a miserable sense that she had angered him; she was also satisfied that her mother's schemes would be futile, and she scarcely spoke again that day.

Holcroft was more than angry; he was disgusted. That Mrs. Mumpson's design upon him was so offensively open that even this ignorant child understood it and was expected to further it, caused such a strong revulsion in his mind that he half resolved to put them both in his market wagon on the morrow and take them back to their relatives. His newly awakened sympathy for Jane quickly vanished. If the girl and her mother had been repulsive from the first, they were now hideous, in view of their efforts to fasten themselves upon him permanently. Fancy, then, the climax in his feelings when, as they passed the house, the front door suddenly opened and Mrs. Mumpson emerged with clasped hands and the exclamation, "Oh, how touching!—just like father and child!"

Without noticing the remark, he said coldly, as he passed, "Jane, go help Mrs. Wiggins get supper."

His anger and disgust grew so strong as he hastily did his evening work that he resolved not to endanger his self-control by sitting down within earshot of Mrs. Mumpson. As soon as possible, therefore, he carried the new stove to his room and put it up. The widow tried to address him as he passed in and out, but he paid no heed to her. At last, he only paused long enough at the kitchen door to say, "Jane,

bring me some supper to my room. Remember, you only are to bring it."

Bewildered and abashed, Mrs. Mumpson rocked nervously. "I had looked for relentings this evening, a general softening," she murmured, "and I don't understand his bearing toward me." Then a happy thought struck her. "I see, I see," she cried softly and ecstatically: "he is struggling with himself; he finds that he must either deny himself my society or yield at once. The end is near."

A little later she, too, appeared at the kitchen door and said, with serious sweetness, "Jane, you can also bring me *my* supper to the parlor."

Mrs. Wiggins shook with mirth in all her vast proportions as she remarked, "Jane, ye can bring me *my* supper from the the stove to the table 'ere, and then vait hon yeself."

CHAPTER XIII

NOT WIFE, BUT WAIF

TOM Watterly's horse was the pride of his heart. It was a bob-tailed, raw-boned animal, but, as Tom complacently remarked to Alida, "He can pass about anything on the road"—a boast that he let no chance escape of verifying. It was a terrible ordeal to the poor woman to go dashing through the streets in an open wagon, feeling that every eye was upon her. With head bowed down, she employed her failing strength in holding herself from falling out, yet almost wishing that she might be dashed against some object that would end her wretched life. It finally occurred to Tom that the woman at his side might not, after her recent experience, share in his enthusiasm, and he pulled up, remarking, with a rough effort at sympathy, "It's a cussed shame you've been treated so, and as soon as you're ready, I'll help you get even with the scamp."

"I'm not well, sir," said Alida, humbly. "I only ask for a quiet place where I can rest till strong enough to do some kind of work."

"Well, well," said Tom, kindly, "don't lose heart. We'll do the best by you we can. That ain't saying very much, though, for we're full and running over."

He soon drew rein at the poorhouse door and sprang out. "I—I—feel strange," Alida gasped.

Tom caught the fainting woman in his arms and shouted, "Here, Bill, Joe, you lazy loons, where are you?"

Three or four half wrecks of men shuffled to his assistance, and together they bore the unconscious woman to the room which was used as a sort of hospital. Some old crones

gathered around with such restoratives as they had at command. Gradually the stricken woman revived, but as the whole miserable truth came back, she turned her face to the wall with a sinking of heart akin to despair. At last, from sheer exhaustion, feverish sleep ensued, from which she often started with moans and low cries. One impression haunted her—she was falling, ever falling into a dark, bottomless abyss.

Hours passed in the same partial stupor, filled with phantoms and horrible dreams. Toward evening, she aroused herself mechanically to take the broth Mrs. Watterly ordered her to swallow, then relapsed into the same lethargy. Late in the night, she became conscious that some one was kneeling at her bedside and fondling her. She started up with a slight cry.

"Don't be afraid; it's only me, dear," said a quavering voice.

In the dim rays of a night lamp, Alida saw an old woman with gray hair falling about her face and on her night-robe. At first, in her confused, feverish impressions, the poor waif was dumb with superstitious awe, and trembled between joy and fear. Could her mother have come to comfort her in her sore extremity?

"Put yer head on me ould withered breast," said the apparition, "an' ye'll know a mither's heart niver changes. I've been alookin' for ye and expectin' ye these long, weary years. They said ye wouldn't come back—that I'd niver find ye ag'in; but I knowed I wud, and here ye are in me arms, me darlint. Don't draw away from yer ould mither. Don't ye be afeard or 'shamed loike. No matter what ye've done or where ye've been or who ye've been with, a mither's heart welcomes ye back jist the same as when yes were a babby an' slept on me breast. A mither's heart ud quench the fires o' hell. I'd go inter the burnin' flames o' the pit an' bear ye out in me arms. So niver fear. Now that I've found ye, ye're safe. Ye'll not rin away from me ag'in. I'll hould ye—I'll hould ye back," and the poor creature clasped

Alida with such conclusive energy that she screamed from pain and terror.

"Ye shall not get away from me, ye shall not go back to evil ways. Whist, whist, be aisy and let me plead wid ye. Think how many long, weary years I've looked for ye and waited for ye. Niver have I slept noight or day in me watchin'. Ye may be so stained an' lost an' ruined that the whole wourld will scorn ye, yet not yer mither, not yer ould mither. O Nora, Nora, why did ye rin away from me? Wasn't I koind? No, no, ye cannot lave me ag'in," and she threw herself on Alida, whose disordered mind was tortured by what she heard. Whether or not it was a more terrible dream than had yet oppressed her, she scarcely knew, but in the excess of her nervous horror she sent out a cry that echoed in every part of the large building. Two old women rushed in and dragged Alida's persecutor screaming away.

"That's allus the way o' it," she shrieked. "As soon as I find me Nora they snatches me and carries me off, and I have to begin me watchin' and waitin' and lookin' ag'in."

Alida continued sobbing and trembling violently. One of the awakened patients sought to assure her by saying, "Don't mind it so, miss. It's only old crazy Kate. Her daughter ran away from her years and years ago—how many no one knows—and when a young woman's brought here she thinks it's her lost Nora. They oughtn't a let her get out, knowin' you was here."

For several days Alida's reason wavered. The nervous shock of her sad experiences had been so great that it did not seem at all improbable that she, like the insane mother, might be haunted for the rest of her life by an overwhelming impression of something lost. In her morbid, shaken mind she confounded the wrong she had received with guilt on her own part. Eventually, she grew calmer and more sensible. Although her conscience acquitted her of intentional evil, nothing could remove the deep-rooted conviction that she was shamed beyond hope of remedy. For a time she was unable to rally from nervous prostration; meanwhile,

her mind was preternaturally active, presenting every detail of the past until she was often ready to cry aloud in her despair.

Tom Watterly took an unusual interest in her case and exhorted the visiting physician to do his best for her. She finally began to improve, and with the first return of strength sought to do something with her feeble hands. The bread of charity was not sweet.

Although the place in which she lodged was clean, and the coarse, unvarying fare abundant, she shrank shuddering, with each day's clearer consciousness, from the majority of those about her. Phases of life of which she had scarcely dreamed were the common topics of conversation. In her mother, she had learned to venerate gray hairs, and it was an awful shock to learn that so many of the feeble creatures about her were coarse, wicked, and evil-disposed. How could their withered lips frame the words they spoke? How could they dwell on subjects that were profanation, even to such wrecks of womanhood as themselves?

Moreover, they persecuted her by their curiosity. The good material in her apparel had been examined and commented on; her wedding ring had been seen and its absence soon noted, for Alida, after gaining the power to recall the past fully, had thrown away the metal lie, feeling that it was the last link in a chain binding her to a loathed and hated relationship. Learning from their questions that the inmates of the almshouse did not know her history, she refused to reveal it, thus awakening endless surmises. Many histories were made for her, the beldams vying with each other in constructing the worst one. Poor Alida soon learned that there was public opinion even in an almshouse, and that she was under its ban. In dreary despondency she thought, "They've found out about me. If such creatures as these think I'm hardly fit to speak to, how can I ever find work among good, respectable people?"

Her extreme depression, the coarse, vulgar, and uncharitable natures by which she was surrounded, retarded her

recovery. By her efforts to do anything in her power for others she disarmed the hostility of some of the women, and those that were more or less demented became fond of her; but the majority probed her wound by every look and word. she was a saint compared with any of these, yet they made her envy their respectability. She often thought, "Would to God that I was as old and ready to die as the feeblest woman here if I could only hold up my head like her."

One day a woman who had a child left it sleeping in its rude wooden cradle and went downstairs. The babe wakened and began to cry. Alida took it up and found a strange solace in rocking it to sleep again upon her breast. At last the mother returned, glared a moment into Alida's appealing eyes, then snatched the child away with the cruel words "Don't ye touch my baby ag'in. To think it ud been in the arms o' the loikes o' ye!"

Alida went away and sobbed until her strength was gone. She found that there were some others ostracized like herself, but they accepted their positions as a matter of course —as if it belonged to them and was least of their troubles.

Her strength was returning, yet she was still feeble when she sent for Mrs. Watterly and asked, "Do you think I'm strong enough to take a place somewhere?"

"You ought to know that better than me," was the chilly reply.

"Do you—do you think I could get a place? I would be willing to do any kind of honest work not beyond my strength."

"You hardly look able to sit up straight. Better wait till you're stronger. I'll tell my husband. If applications come, he'll see about it," and she turned coldly away.

A day or two later Tom came and said brusquely, but not unkindly, "Don't like my hotel, hey? What can you do?"

"I'm used to sewing, but I'd try to do almost anything by which I could earn my living."

"Best thing to do is to prosecute that scamp and make him pay you a good round sum."

She shook her head decidedly. "I don't wish to see him again. I don't wish to go before people and have the —the—past talked about. I'd like a place with some kind, quiet people who keep no other help. Perhaps they wouldn't take me if they knew; but I would be so faithful to them, and try so hard to learn what they wanted—"

"That's all nonsense, their not taking you. I'll find you a place some day, but you're not strong enough yet. You'd be brought right back here. You're as pale as a ghost—almost look like one. So don't be impatient, but give me a chance to find you a good place. I feel sorry for you, and don't want you to get among folks that have no feelings. Don't you worry now; chirk up, and you'll come out all right."

"I—I think that if—if I'm employed, the people who take me ought to know," said Alida, with bowed head.

"They'll be blamed fools if they don't think more of you when they do know," was his response. "Still, that shall be as you please. I've told only my wife, and they've kept mum at the police station, so the thing hasn't got into the papers."

Alida's head bowed lower still as she replied, "I thank you. My only wish now is to find some quiet place in which I can work and be left to myself."

"Very well," said Tom, good-naturedly. "Cheer up, I'll be on the lookout for you."

She turned to the window, near which she was sitting, to hide the tears which his rough kindness evoked. "He don't seem to shrink from me as if I wasn't fit to be spoken to," she thought; "but his wife did. I'm afraid people won't take me when they know."

The April sunshine poured in at the window; the grass was becoming green; a robin alighted on a tree near by and poured out a jubilant song. For a few moments hope, that had been almost dead in her heart, revived. As she looked gratefully at the bird, thanking it in her heart for the song, it darted upon a string hanging on an adjacent spray and

bore it to a crotch between two boughs. Then Alida saw it was building a nest. Her woman's heart gave way. "Oh," she moaned, "I shall never have a home again! no place shared by one who cares for me. To work, and to be tolerated for the sake of my work, is all that's left."

CHAPTER XIV

A PITCHED BATTLE

IT was an odd household under Holcroft's roof on the evening of the Sunday we have described. The farmer, in a sense, had "taken sanctuary" in his own room, that he might escape the manœuvring wiles of his tormenting housekeeper. If she would content herself with general topics he would try to endure her foolish, high-flown talk until the three months expired; but that she should speedily and openly take the initiative in matrimonial designs was proof of such an unbalanced mind that he was filled with nervous dread. "Hanged if one can tell what such a silly, hair-brained woman will do next," he thought, as he brooded by the fire. "Sunday or no Sunday, I feel as if I'd like to take my horsewhip and give Lemuel Weeks a piece of my mind."

Such musings did not promise well for Mrs. Mumpson, scheming in the parlor below; but, as we have seen, she had the faculty of arranging all future events to her mind. That matters had not turned out in the past as she had expected, counted for nothing. She was one who could not be taught, even by experience. The most insignificant thing in Holcroft's dwelling had not escaped her scrutiny and pretty accurate guess as to value, yet she could not see or understand the intolerable disgust and irritation which her ridiculous conduct excited. In a weak mind, egotism and selfishness, beyond a certain point, pass into practical insanity. All sense of delicacy, of the fitness of things, is lost; even the power to consider the rights and feelings of others

is wanting. Unlike poor Holcroft, Mrs. Mumpson had few misgivings in regard to coming years. As she rocked unceasingly before the parlor fire, she arranged everything in regard to his future as well as her own.

Jane, quite forgotten, was oppressed with a miserable presentiment of evil. Her pinched but intense little mind was concentrated on two facts—Holcroft's anger and her mother's lack of sense. From such premises it did not take her long to reason out but one conclusion—"visitin' again;" and this was the summing up of all evils. Now and then a tear would force its way out of one of her little eyes, but otherwise she kept her troubles to herself.

Mrs. Wiggins was the only complacent personage in the house, and she unbent with a garrulous affability to Jane, which could be accounted for in but one way—Holcroft had forgotten about his cider barrel, thereby unconsciously giving her the chance to sample its contents freely. She was now smoking her pipe with much content, and indulging in pleasing reminiscences which the facts of her life scarcely warranted.

"Ven hi vas as leetlĕ a gall as ye are," she began, and then she related experiences quite devoid of the simplicity and innocence of childhood. The girl soon forgot her fears and listened with avidity until the old dame's face grew heavier, if possible, with sleep, and she stumbled off to bed.

Having no wish to see or speak to her mother again, the child blew out the candle and stole silently up the stairway. At last Mrs. Mumpson took her light and went noisily around, seeing to the fastenings of doors and windows. "I know he is listening to every sound from me, and he shall learn what a caretaker I am," she murmured softly.

Once out-of-doors in the morning, with his foot on the native heath of his farm, Holcroft's hopefulness and courage always returned. He was half angry with himself at his nervous irritation of the evening before. "If she becomes so cranky that I can't stand her, I'll pay the three months' wages and clear her out," he had concluded, and he went

about his morning work with a grim purpose to submit to very little nonsense.

Cider is akin to vinegar, and Mrs. Wiggins's liberal potations of the evening before had evidently imparted a marked acidity to her temper. She laid hold of the kitchen utensils as if she had a spite against them, and when Jane, confiding in the friendliness shown so recently, came down to assist, she was chased out of doors with language we forbear to repeat. Mrs. Mumpson, therefore, had no intimation of the low state of the barometer in the region of the kitchen. "I have taken time to think deeply and calmly," she murmured. "The proper course has been made clear to me. He is somewhat uncouth; he is silent and unable to express his thoughts and emotions—in brief, undeveloped; he is awfully irreligious. Moth and rust are busy in this house; much that would be so useful is going to waste. He must learn to look upon me as the developer, the caretaker, a patient and helpful embodiment of female influence. I will now begin actively my mission of making him an ornerment to society. That mountainous Mrs. Viggins must be replaced by a deferential girl who will naturally look up to me. How can I be a true caretaker—how can I bring repose and refinement to this dwelling with two hundred pounds of female impudence always in my way? Mr. Holcroft shall see that Mrs. Viggins is an unseemly and jarring discord in our home," and she brought the rocking-chair from the parlor to the kitchen, with a serene and lofty air. Jane hovered near the window, watching.

At first, there was an ominous silence in respect to words. Portentous sounds increased, however, for Mrs. Wiggins strode about with martial tread, making the boards creak and the dishes clatter, while her red eyes shot lurid and sanguinary gleams. She would seize a dipper as if it were a foe, slamming it upon the table again as if striking an enemy. Under her vigorous manipulation, kettles and pans resounded with reports like firearms.

Mrs. Mumpson was evidently perturbed; her calm supe-

riority was forsaking her; every moment she rocked faster, a sure indication that she was not at peace. At last she said, with great dignity, "Mrs. Viggins, I must request you to perform your tasks with less clamor. My nerves are not equal to this peculiar way of taking up and laying down things."

"Vell, jes' ye vait a minute, han hi'll show ye 'ow hi kin take hup things han put 'em down hag'in hout 'o my vay," and before Mrs. Mumpson could interfere, she found herself lifted, chair and all bodily, and carried to the parlor. Between trepidation and anger, she could only gasp during the transit, and when left in the middle of the parlor floor she looked around in utter bewilderment.

It so happened that Holcroft, on his way from the barn, had seen Jane looking in at the window, and, suspecting something amiss, had arrived just in time for the spectacle. Convulsed with laughter, he returned hastily to the barn; while Jane expressed her feelings, whatever they were, by executing something like a hornpipe before the window.

Mrs. Mumpson, however, was not vanquished. She had only made a compulsory retreat from the scene of hostilities, and after rallying her shattered faculties, advanced again with the chair. "How dared you, you disreputerble female," she began.

Mrs. Wiggins turned slowly and ominously upon her. "Ye call me a disrupterbul female hag'in, han ye vont find hit 'ealthy."

Mrs. Mumpson prudently backed toward the door before delivering her return fire.

"Woman!" she cried, "are you out of your mind? Don't you know I'm housekeeper here and that it's my duty to superintend you and your work?"

"Vell, then hi'll double ye hup hand put ye hon the shelf hof the dresser han' lock the glass door hon ye. From hup there ye kin see all that's goin' hon and sup'intend to yer 'eart's content," and she started for her superior officer.

Mrs. Mumpson backed so precipitately with her chair that

it struck against the door-case and she sat down hard. Seeing that Mrs. Wiggins was almost upon her, she darted back into the parlor, leaving the chair as a trophy in the hands of her enemy. Mrs. Wiggins was somewhat appeased by this second triumph, and with the hope of adding gall and bitterness to Mrs. Mumpson's defeat, she took the chair to her rival's favorite rocking-place, lighted her pipe and sat down in grim complacency. Mrs. Mumpson warily approached to recover a support which, from long habit, had become moral as well as physical, and her indignation knew no bounds when she saw it creaking under the weight of her foe. It must be admitted, however, that her ire was not so great that she did not retain the "better part of valor," for she stepped back, unlocked the front door and set it ajar. Returning, she opened with a volubility that awed even Mrs. Wiggins for a moment. "You miserable, mountainous pauper, you interloper, you unrefined, irresponserble, unregenerate female, do you know what you have done in thus outraging *me?* I'm a respecterble woman, respecterbly connected. I'm here in a responserble station. When Mr. Holcroft appears he'll drive you from the dwelling which you vulgarize. Your presence makes this apartment a den. You are a wild beast—"

"Hi'm a vile beastes, ham hi?" cried Mrs. Wiggins, at last stung into action, and she threw her lighted pipe at the open mouth that was discharging high-sounding epithets by the score.

It struck the lintel over the widow's head, was shattered and sent down upon her a shower of villanously smelling sparks. Mrs. Mumpson shrieked and sought frantically to keep her calico wrapper from taking fire. Meanwhile, Mrs. Wiggins rose and took a step or two that she might assist should there be any positive danger, for she had not yet reached a point of malignity which would lead her to witness calmly an *auto-da-fe.* This was Jane's opportunity. Mrs. Wiggins had alienated this small and hitherto friendly power, and now, with a returning impulse of loyalty, it took sides

with the weaker party. The kitchen door was on a crack; the child pushed it noiselessly open, darted around behind the stove and withdrew the rocking-chair.

Mrs. Wiggins's brief anxiety and pre-occupation passed and she stepped backward again to sit down. She did sit down, but with such terrible force that the stove and nearly everything else in the room threatened to fall with her. She sat helplessly for a bewildered moment, while Jane, with the chair, danced before her, exclaiming, tauntingly, "That's for chasing me out as if I was a cat."

"Noo hi'll chase ye both hout," cried the ireful Wiggins, scrambling to her feet. She made good her threat, for Holcroft, a moment later, saw mother and daughter, the latter carrying the chair, rushing from the front door, and Mrs. Wiggins, armed with a great wooden spoon, waddling after them, her objurgations mingling with Mrs. Mumpson's shrieks and Jane's shrill laughter. The widow caught a glimpse of him standing in the barn-door, and, as if borne by the wind, she flew toward him, crying, "He shall be my protector."

He barely had time to whisk through a side door and close it after him. The widow's impetuous desire to pant out the story of her wrongs carried her into the midst of the barnyard, where she was speedily confronted by an unruly young heifer that could scarcely be blamed for hostility to such a wild looking object.

The animal shook its head threateningly as it advanced. Again the widow's shrieks resounded. This time Holcroft was about to come to the rescue, when the beleaguered woman made a dash for the top of the nearest fence, reminding her amused looker-on of the night of her arrival when she had perched like some strange sort of bird on the wagon wheel.

Seeing that she was abundantly able to escape alone, the farmer remained in concealment. Although disgusted and angry at the scenes taking place he was scarcely able to restrain roars of laughter. Perched upon the fence, the widow called piteously for him to lift her down, but he was

not to be caught by any such device. At last, giving up hope and still threatened by the heifer, she went over on the other side. Knowing that she must make a detour before reaching the dwelling, Holcroft went thither rapidly with the purpose of restoring order at once. "Jane," he said sternly, "take that chair to the parlor and leave it there. Let there be no more such nonsense."

At his approach, Mrs. Wiggins had retreated sullenly to the kitchen. "Come," he ordered, good-naturedly, "hasten breakfast and let there be no more quarrelling."

"Hif hi vas left to do me work hin peace"—she began.

"Well, you shall do it in peace."

At this moment, Mrs. Mumpson came tearing in, quite oblivious of the fact that she had left a goodly part of her calico skirt on a nail of the fence. She was rushing toward Holcroft, when he said, sternly and with a repellent gesture, "Stop and listen to me. If there's any more of this quarrelling like cats and dogs in my house, I'll send for the constable and have you all arrested. If you are not all utterly demented and hopeless fools you will know that you came here to do my work, and nothing else." Then catching a glimpse of Mrs. Mumpson's dress, and fearing he should laugh outright, he turned abruptly on his heel and went to his room, where he was in a divided state between irrepressible mirth and vexation.

Mrs. Mumpson also fled to her room. She felt that the proper course for her at this juncture was a fit of violent hysterics; but a prompt douche from the water pitcher, administered by the unsympathetic Jane, effectually checked the first symptoms. "Was ever a respecterble woman—"

"You aint respectable," interrupted the girl, as she departed, "you look like a scarecrow. 'Fi's you I'd begin to show some sense now."

CHAPTER XV

"WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ME?"

HOLCROFT'S reference to a constable and arrest, though scarcely intended to be more than a vague threat, had the effect of clearing the air like a clap of thunder. Jane had never lost her senses, such as she possessed, and Mrs. Wiggins recovered hers sufficiently to apologize to the farmer when he came down to breakfast. "But that Mumpson's hawfully haggravatin', master, as ye know yeself, hi'm a-thinkin'. Vud ye jis tell a body vat she is 'ere han 'ow hi'm to get hon vith 'er. Hif hi'm to take me horders from 'er hi'd ruther go back to the poor-'us."

"You are to take your orders from me and no one else. All I ask is that you go on quietly with your work and pay no attention to her. You know well enough that I can't have such goings on. I want you to let Jane help you and learn how to do everything as far as she can. Mrs. Mumpson can do the mending and ironing, I suppose. At any rate, I won't have any more quarrelling and uproar. I'm a quiet man and intend to have a quiet house. You and Jane can get along very well in the kitchen; and you say you understand the dairy work."

"Vell, hi does, han noo hi've got me horders hi'll go right along."

Mrs. Mumpson was like one who had been rudely shaken out of a dream, and she appeared to have sense enough to realize that she couldn't assume so much at first as she anticipated. She received from Jane a cup of coffee, and said, feebly, "I can partake of no more after the recent trying events."

For some hours she was a little dazed, but her mind was of too light weight to be long cast down. Jane rehearsed Holcroft's words, described his manner, and sought with much insistence to show her mother that she must drop her nonsense at once. "I can see it in his eye," said the girl, "that he won't stand much more. If yer don't come down and keep yer hands busy and yer tongue still we'll tramp. As to his marrying you, bah! he'd jes' as soon marry Mrs. Wiggins."

This was awful prose, but Mrs. Mumpson was too bewildered and discouraged for a time to dispute it, and the household fell into a somewhat regular routine. The widow appeared at her meals with the air of a meek and suffering martyr; Holcroft was exceedingly brief in his replies to her questions and paid no heed to her remarks. After supper and his evening work, he went directly to his room. Every day, however, he secretly chafed, with ever-increasing discontent, over this tormenting presence in his house. The mending and such work as she attempted was so wretchedly performed that it would better have been left undone. She was also recovering her garrulousness, and mistook his toleration and her immunity in the parlor for proof of a growing consideration. "He knows that my hands were never made for such coarse, menial tasks as that Viggins does," she thought, as she darned one of his stockings in a way that would render it almost impossible for him to put his foot into it again. "The events of last Monday morning were unfortunate, unforeseen, unprecedented. I was unprepared for such vulgar, barbarous, unheard of proceedings—taken off my feet, as it were; but now that he's had time to think it all over he sees that I am not a common woman like Viggins"—Mrs. Mumpson would have suffered much rather than have accorded her enemy the prefix of Mrs.—"who is only fit to be among pots and kettles. He leaves me in the parlor as if a refined apartment became me and I became it. Time and my influence will mellow, soften, elevate, develop, and at last awaken a desire for my society,

then yearnings. My first error was in not giving myself time to make a proper impression. He will soon begin to yield like the earth without. First it is hard and frosty, then it is cold and muddy, if I may permit myself so disagreeable an illustration. Now he is becoming mellow, and soon every word I utter will be like good seed in good ground. How aptly it all fits. I have only to be patient."

She was finally left almost to utter idleness, for Jane and Mrs. Wiggins gradually took from the incompetent hands even the light tasks which she had attempted. She made no protest, regarding all as another proof that Holcroft was beginning to recognize her superiority and unfitness for menial tasks. She would maintain, however, her character as the caretaker and ostentatiously inspected everything; she also tried to make as much noise in fastening up the dwelling at night as if she were barricading a castle. Holcroft would listen grimly, well aware that no house had been entered in Oakville during his memory. He had taken an early occasion to say at the table that he wished no one to enter his room except Jane, and that he would not permit any infringement of this rule. Mrs. Mumpson's feelings had been hurt at first by this order, but she soon satisfied herself that it had been meant for Mrs. Wiggins's benefit and not her own. She found, however, that Jane interpreted it literally. "If either of you set foot in that room I'll tell him," she said, flatly. "I've had my orders and I'm a-goin' to obey. There's to be no more rummagin'. If you'll give me the keys I'll put things back in order ag'in."

"Well, I won't give you the keys. I'm the proper person to put things in order if you did no replace them properly. You are just making an excuse to rummage yourself. My motive for inspecting is very different from yours."

"Shouldn't wonder if you was sorry some day," the girl had remarked, and so the matter had dropped and been forgotten.

Holcroft solaced himself with the fact that Jane and Mrs. Wiggins served his meals regularly and looked after the

dairy with better care than it had received since his wife died. "If I had only those two in the house I could get along first-rate," he thought. "After the three months are up I'll try to make such an arrangement. I'd pay the mother and send her off now, but if I did, Lemuel Weeks would put her up to a lawsuit."

April days brought the longed-for plowing and planting, and the farmer was so busy and absorbed in his work that Mrs. Mumpson had less and less place in his thoughts, even as a thorn in the flesh. One bright afternoon, however, chaos came again unexpectedly. Mrs. Wiggins did not suggest a volatile creature, yet such, alas! she was. She apparently exhaled and was lost, leaving no trace. The circumstances of her disappearance permit of a very matter-of-fact and not very creditable explanation. On the day in question she prepared an unusually good dinner, and the farmer had enjoyed it in spite of Mrs. Mumpson's presence and desultory remarks. The morning had been fine and he had made progress in his early spring work. Mrs. Wiggins felt that her hour and opportunity had come. Following him to the door, she said in a low tone and yet with a decisive accent, as if she was claiming a right, "Master, hi'd thank ye for me two weeks' wages."

He unsuspectingly and unhesitatingly gave it to her, thinking, "That's the way with such people. They want to be paid often and be sure of their money. She'll work all the better for having it."

Mrs. Wiggins knew the hour when the stage passed the house; she had made up a bundle without a very close regard to *meum* or *tuum*, and was ready to flit. The chance speedily came.

The "caretaker" was rocking in the parlor and would disdain to look, while Jane had gone out to help plant some early potatoes on a warm hillside. The coast was clear. Seeing the stage coming, the old woman waddled down the lane at a remarkable pace, paid her fare to town, and the Holcroft kitchen knew her no more. That she found the

"friend" she had wished to see on her way out to the farm, and that this friend brought her quickly under Tom Watterly's care again, goes without saying.

As the shadows lengthened and the robins became tuneful, Holcroft said, "You've done well, Jane. Thank you. Now you can go back to the house."

The child soon returned in breathless haste to the field where the farmer was covering the potato pieces she had dropped, and cried, "Mrs. Wiggins's gone."

Like a flash, the woman's motive in asking for her wages occurred to him, but he started for the house to assure himself of the truth. "Perhaps she's in the cellar," he said, remembering the cider barrel, "or she's out for a walk."

"No, she ain't," persisted Jane. "I've looked everywhere and all over the barn, and she ain't nowhere. Mother hain't seen her, nuther."

With dreary misgivings, Holcroft remembered that he no longer had a practical ally in the old Englishwoman, and he felt that a new breaking up was coming. He looked wistfully at Jane, and thought, "I *could* get along with that child if the mother was away. But that can't be; *she'd* visit here indefinitely if Jane stayed."

When Mrs. Mumpson learned from Jane of Mrs. Wiggins's disappearance, she was thrown into a state of strong excitement. She felt that her hour and opportunity might be near also, and she began to rock very fast. "What else could he expect of such a female?" she soliloquized. "I've no doubt but she's taken things, too. He'll now learn my value and what it is to have a caretaker who will never desert him."

Spirits and courage rose with the emergency; her thoughts hurried her along like a dry leaf caught in a March gale. "Yes," she murmured, "the time has come for me to act, to dare, to show him in his desperate need and hour of desertion what might be, may be, must be. He will now see clearly the difference between these peculiar females who come and go, and a respecterble woman and a mother

who can be depended upon—one who will never steal away like a thief in the night."

She saw Holcroft approaching the house with Jane; she heard him ascend to Mrs. Wiggins's room, then return to the kitchen and ejaculate, "Yes, she's gone, sure enough."

"Now, *act*," murmured the widow, and she rushed toward the farmer with clasped hands, and cried with emotion, "Yes, she's gone; but I'm not gone. You are not deserted. Jane will minister to you; I will be the caretaker, and our home will be all the happier because that monstrous creature is absent. Dear Mr. Holcroft, don't be so blind to your own interests and happiness, don't remain undeveloped. Everything is wrong here if you would but see it. You are lonely and desolate. Moth and rust have entered, things in unopened drawers and closets are moulding and going to waste. Yield to true female influence and—"

Holcroft had been rendered speechless at first by this onslaught, but the reference to unopened drawers and closets awakened a sudden suspicion. Had she dared to touch what had belonged to his wife? "What!" he exclaimed sharply, interrupting her; then with an expression of disgust and anger, he passed her swiftly and went to his room. A moment later came the stern summons, "Jane, come here."

"Now you'll see what'll come of that rummagin'," whimpered Jane. "You ain't got no sense at all to go at him so. He's jus' goin' to put us right out," and she went upstairs as if to execution.

"Have I failed?" gasped Mrs. Mumpson, and retreating to the chair, she rocked nervously.

"Jane," said Holcroft, in hot anger, "my wife's things have been pulled out of her bureau and stuffed back again as if they were no better than dishcloths. Who did it?"

The child now began to cry aloud. "There, there," he said, with intense irritation, "I can't trust you either."

"I hain't—touched 'em—since you told me—told me—not to do things on the sly," the girl sobbed, brokenly; but he had closed the door upon her, and did not hear.

He could have forgiven her almost anything but this. Since she only had been permitted to take care of his room, he naturally thought that she committeed the sacrilege, and her manner had confirmed this impression. Of course the mother had been present and probably had assisted; but he had expected nothing better of her.

He took the things out, folded and smoothed them as carefully as he could with his heavy hands and clumsy fingers. His gentle, almost reverent touch was in strange contrast with his flushed, angry face and gleaming eyes. "This is the worst that's happened yet," he muttered. "Oh, Lemuel Weeks, it's well you are not here now, or we might both have cause to be sorry. It was you who put these prying, and for all I know, thieving creatures into my house, and it was as mean a trick as ever one man played another. You and this precious cousin of yours thought you could bring about a marriage; you put her up to her ridiculous antics. Faugh! the very thought of it all makes me sick."

"Oh, mother, what shall I do?" Jane cried, rushing into the parlor and throwing herself on the floor, "he's goin' to put us right out."

"He can't put me out before the three months are up," quavered the widow.

"Yes he can. We've been a-rummagin' where we'd no bizniss to be. He's mad enough to do anything; he jes' looks awful; I'm afraid of him."

"Jane," said her mother, plaintively, "I feel indisposed. I think I'll retire."

"Yes, that's the way with *you*," sobbed the child. "You got me into the scrape and now you retire."

Mrs. Mumpson's confidence in herself and her schemes was terribly shaken. "I must act very discreetly. I must be alone that I may think over these untoward events. Mr. Holcroft has been so warped by the past female influences of his life that there's no counting on his action. He taxes me sorely," she explained, and then ascended the stairs.

"Oh! oh!" moaned the child, as she writhed on the floor,

"Mother ain't got no sense at all. What *is* goin' to become of me? I'd ruther hang about his barn than go back to cousin Lemuel's or any other cousin's."

Spurned by one hope, she at last sprang up and went to the kitchen. It was already growing dark, and she lighted the lamp, kindled the fire, and began getting supper with breathless energy.

As far as he could discover, Holcroft was satisfied that nothing had been taken. In this respect he was right. Mrs. Mumpson's curiosity and covetousness were boundless, but she would not steal. There are few who do not draw the line somewhere.

Having tried to put the articles back as they were before, he locked them up, and went hastily down and out, feeling that he must regain his self-control and decide upon his future action at once. "I will then carry out my purposes in a way that will give the Weeks tribe no chance to make trouble."

As he passed the kitchen windows he saw Jane rushing about as if possessed, and he stopped to watch her. It soon became evident that she was trying to get his supper. His heart relented at once in spite of himself. "The poor, wronged child!" he muttered. "Why should I be so hard on her for doing what she's been brought up to do? Well, well, it's too bad to send her away, but I can't help it. I'd lose my own reason if the mother was here much longer, and if I kept Jane, her idiotic mother would stay in spite of me. If she didn't there'd be endless talk and lawsuits, too, like enough, about separating parent and child. Jane's too young and little, anyway, to be here alone and do the work. But I'm sorry for her, I declare I am, and I wish I could do something to give her a chance in the world. If my wife was only living we'd take and bring her up, disagreeable and homely as she is; but there's no use of my trying to do anything alone. I fear, after all, that I shall have to give up the old place and go—I don't know where. What is to become of her?"

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. MUMPSON'S VICISSITUDES

HAVING completed her preparations for supper, Jane stole timidly up to Holcroft's room to summon him. Her first rap on his door was scarcely audible, then she ventured to knock louder and finally to call him, but there was no response. Full of vague dread she went to her mother's room and said, "He won't answer me; he's so awful mad that I don't know what he'll do."

"I think he has left his apartment," her mother moaned from the bed.

"Why couldn't yer tell me so before?" cried Jane. "What yer gone to bed for? If you'd only show some sense and try to do what he brought you here for, like enough he'd keep us yet."

"My heart's too crushed, Jane—"

"Oh, bother, bother!" and the child rushed away. She looked into the dark parlor and called, "Mr. Holcroft!" Then she appeared in the kitchen again, the picture of uncouth distress and perplexity. A moment later she opened the door and darted toward the barn.

"What do you wish, Jane?" said Holcroft, emerging from a shadowy corner and recalling her.

"Sup—supper's—ready," sobbed the child.

He came in and sat down at the table, considerably appearing not to notice her until she had a chance to recover composure. She vigorously used the sleeves of both arms in drying her eyes, then stole in and found a seat in a dusky corner.

"Why don't you come to supper?" he asked quietly.

"Don't want any."

"You had better take some up to your mother."

"She oughtn't to have any."

"That doesn't make any difference. I want you to take up something to her, and then come down and eat your supper like a sensible girl."

"I ain't been sensible, nor mother nuther."

"Do as I say, Jane." The child obeyed, but she couldn't swallow anything but a little coffee.

Holcroft was in a quandary. He had not the gift of speaking soothing yet meaningless words, and was too honest to raise false hopes. He was therefore almost as silent and embarrassed as Jane herself. To the girl's furtive scrutiny, he did not seem hardened against her, and she at last ventured, "Say, I didn't touch them drawers after you told me not to do anything on the sly."

"When were they opened? Now tell me the truth, Jane."

"Mother opened them the first day you left us alone. I told her you wouldn't like it, but she said she was housekeeper; she said how it was her duty to inspect everything. I wanted to inspect too. We was jest rummagin'—that's what it was. After the things were all pulled out, mother got the rocker and wouldn't do anything. It was gettin' late, and I was frightened and poked 'em back in a hurry. Mother wanted to rummage ag'in the other day and I wouldn't let her; then she wouldn't let me have the keys, so I could fix 'em up."

"But the keys were in my pocket, Jane."

"Mother has a lot of keys. I've told you jes' how it all was."

"Nothing was taken away?"

"No. Mother ain't got sense, but she never takes things. I nuther 'cept when I'm hungry. Never took anything here. Say, are you goin' to send us away?"

"I fear I shall have to, Jane. I'm sorry for *you*, for I

believe you would try to do the best you could if given a chance, and I can see you never had a chance."

"No," said the child, blinking hard to keep the tears out of her eyes. "I ain't had no teachin'. I've jes' kinder growed along with the farm hands and rough boys. Them that didn't hate me teased me. Say, couldn't I stay in your barn and sleep in the hay?"

Holcroft was sorely perplexed and pushed away his half-eaten supper. He knew himself what it was to be friendless and lonely, and his heart softened toward this worse than motherless child.

"Jane," he said, kindly, "I'm just as sorry for you as I can be, but you don't know the difficulties in the way of what you wish and I fear I can't make you understand them. Indeed, it would not be best to tell you all of them. If I could keep you at all, you should stay in the house, and I'd be kind to you, but it can't be. I may not stay here myself. My future course is very uncertain. There's no use of my trying to go on as I have. Perhaps some day I can do something for you, and if I can, I will. I will pay your mother her three months' wages in full in the morning, and then I want you both to get your things into your trunk, and I'll take you to your cousin Lemuel's."

Driven almost to desperation, Jane suggested the only scheme she could think of. "If you stayed here and I run away and came back, wouldn't you keep me? I'd work all day and all night jes' for the sake of stayin'."

"No, Jane," said Holcroft, firmly, "you'd make me no end of trouble if you did that. If you'll be a good girl and learn how to do things, I'll try to find you a place among kind people some day when you're older and can act for yourself."

"You're afraid 'fi's here mother'd come a-visitin'," said the girl, keenly.

"You're too young to understand half the trouble that might follow. My plans are too uncertain for me to tangle myself up. You and your mother must go away at once, so

I can do what I must do before it's too late in the season. Here's a couple of dollars which you can keep for yourself," and he went up to his room, feeling that he could not witness the child's distress any longer.

He fought hard against despondency and tried to face the actual condition of his affairs. "I might have known," he thought, "that things would have turned out somewhat as they have, with such women in the house, and I don't see much chance of getting better ones. I've been so bent on staying and going on as I used to that I've just shut my eyes to the facts." He got out an old account book and pored over it a long time. The entries therein were blind enough, but at last he concluded, "It's plain that I've lost money on the dairy ever since my wife died, and the prospects now are worse than ever. That Weeks tribe will set the whole town talking against me and it will be just about impossible to get a decent woman to come here. I might as well have an auction and sell all the cows but one, at once. After that, if I find I can't make out living alone, I'll put the place in better order and sell or rent. I can get my own meals after a fashion, and old Jonathan Johnson's wife will do my washing and mending. It's time it was done better than it has been, for some of my clothes make me look like a scarecrow. I believe Jonathan will come with his cross dog and stay here too, when I must be away. Well, well, it's a hard lot for a man; but I'd be about as bad off, and a hundred fold more lonely, if I went anywhere else. I can only feel my way along and live a day at a time. I'll learn what can be done and what can't be. One thing is clear; I can't go on with this Mrs. Mumpson in the house a day longer. She makes me creep and crawl all over, and the first thing I know I shall be swearing like a bloody pirate unless I get rid of her. If she wasn't such a hopeless idiot I'd let her stay for the sake of Jane, but I won't pay her good wages to make my life a burden a day longer," and with like self-communings he spent the evening until the habit of early drowsiness overcame him.

The morning found Jane dispirited and a little sullen, as older and wiser people are apt to be when disappointed. She employed herself in getting breakfast carelessly and languidly, and the result was not satisfactory.

"Where's your mother?" Holcroft asked when he came in.

"She told me to tell you she was indisposed."

"Indisposed to go to Lemuel Weeks's?"

"I 'spect she means she's sick."

He frowned and looked suspiciously at the girl. Here was a new complication, and very possibly a trick.

"What's the matter with her?"

"Dunno."

"Well, she had better get well enough to go by this afternoon," he remarked, controlling his irritation with difficulty, and nothing more was said.

Full of his new plans, he spent a busy forenoon and then came to dinner. It was the same old story. He went up and knocked at Mrs. Mumpson's door, saying that he wished to speak to her.

"I'm too indisposed to transact business," she replied feebly.

"You must be ready to-morrow morning," he called. "I have business plans which can't be delayed," and he turned away muttering rather sulphurous words.

"He will relent; his hard heart will soften at last—" But we shall not weary the reader with the long soliloquies with which she beguiled her politic seclusion, as she regarded it. Poor, unsophisticated Jane made matters worse. The condition of life among her much-visited relatives now existed again. She was not wanted, and her old sly, sullen, and furtive manner reasserted itself. Much of Holcroft's sympathy was thus alienated, yet he partially understood and pitied her. It became, however, all the more clear that he must get rid of both mother and child, and that further relations with either of them could only lead to trouble.

The following morning only Jane appeared. "Is your mother really sick?" he asked.

"S'pose so," was the laconic reply.

"You haven't taken much pains with the breakfast, Jane."

"'Taint no use."

With knitted brows he thought deeply, and silently ate the wretched meal which had been prepared. Then, remarking that he might do some writing, he went up to a small attic room which had been used occasionally by a hired man. It contained a covered pipe-hole leading into the chimney-flue. Removing the cover, he stopped up the flue with an old woollen coat. "I suppose I'll have to meet tricks with tricks," he muttered.

Returning to his own apartment, he lighted a fire in the stove and laid upon the kindling blaze some dampened wood, then went out and quietly hitched his horses to the wagon.

The pungent odor of smoke soon filled the house. The cover over the pipehole in Mrs. Mumpson's room was not very secure, and thick volumes began to pour in upon the startled widow. "Jane!" she shrieked.

If Jane was sullen toward Holcroft, she was furious at her mother, and paid no heed at first to her cry.

"Jane, Jane, the house is on fire!"

Then the child did fly up the stairway. The smoke seemed to confirm the words of her mother, who was dressing in hot haste. "Run and tell Mr. Holcroft," she cried.

"I won't," said the girl. "If he won't keep us in the house I don't care if he don't have any house."

"No, no, tell him," screamed Mrs. Mumpson. "If we save his house he will relent. Gratitude will overwhelm him. So far from turning us away, he will sue, he will plead for forgiveness for his former harshness; his home saved will be our home won. Just put our things in the trunk first. Perhaps the house can't be saved, and you know we must save *our* things. Help me, quick. There, there now, now—" both were sneezing and choking in a half-strangled manner. "Now let me lock it; my hand trembles so; take hold and

drag it out; drag it downstairs; no matter how it scratches things!"

Having reached the hall below, she opened the door and shrieked for Holcroft; Jane also began running toward the barn. The farmer came hastily out, and shouted, "What's the matter?"

"The house is on fire!" they screamed in chorus.

To carry out his ruse, he ran swiftly to the house. Mrs. Mumpson stood before him wringing her hands and crying, "O dear Mr. Holcroft, can't I do anything to help you? I would so like to help you and—"

"Yes, my good woman, let me get in the door and see what's the matter. Oh, here's your trunk. That's sensible. Better get it outside," and he went up the stairs two steps at a time and rushed into his room.

"Jane, Jane," ejaculated Mrs. Mumpson, sinking on a seat in the porch, "he called me his good woman!" But Jane was busy dragging the trunk out of doors. Having secured her own and her mother's worldly possessions, she called, "Shall I bring water and carry things out?"

"No," he replied, "not yet. There's something the matter with the chimney," and he hastened up to the attic room, removed the clog from the flue, put on the cover again, and threw open the window. Returning, he locked the door of the room which Mrs. Mumpson had occupied and came downstairs. "I must get a ladder and examine the chimney," he said as he passed.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Holcroft," the widow began.

"Can't talk with you yet," and he hastened on.

"As soon as he's sure the house is safe, Jane, all will be well." But the girl had grown hopeless and cynical. She had not penetrated his scheme to restore her mother to health, but understood the man well enough to be sure that her mother's hopes would end as they had in the past. She sat down apathetically on the trunk to see what would happen next.

After a brief inspection Holcroft came down from the

roof and said, "The chimney will have to be repaired," which was true enough and equally so of other parts of the dwelling. The fortunes of the owner were reflected in the appearance of the building.

If it were a possible thing Holcroft wished to carry out his ruse undetected, and he hastened upstairs again, ostensibly to see that all danger had passed, but in reality to prepare his mind for an intensely disagreeable interview. "I'd rather face a mob of men than that one idiotic woman," he muttered. "I could calculate the actions of a setting hen with her head cut off better than I can this widow's. But there's no help for it," and he came down looking very resolute. "I've let the fire in my stove go out, and there's no more danger," he said, quietly, as he sat down on the porch opposite Mrs. Mumpson.

"Oh-h," she exclaimed, with a long breath of relief, "we've saved the dwelling. What would we have done if it had burned down! We would have been homeless."

"That may be my condition soon, as it is," he said, coldly. "I am very glad, Mrs. Mumpson, that you are so much better. As Jane told you, I suppose, I will pay you the sum I agreed to give you for three months' service—"

"My dear Mr. Holcroft, my nerves have been too shaken to talk business this morning," and the widow leaned back and looked as if she were going to faint. "I'm only a poor lone woman," she added feebly, "and you cannot be so lacking in the milk of human kindness as to take advantage of me."

"No, madam, nor shall I allow you and Lemuel Weeks to take advantage of me. This is my house and I have a right to make my own arrangements."

"It might all be arranged so easily in another way," sighed the widow.

"It cannot be arranged in any other way—" he began.

"Mr. Holcroft," she cried, leaning suddenly forward with clasped hands and speaking effusively, "you but now called me your good woman. Think how much those words mean.

Make them true, now that you've spoken them. Then you won't be homeless and will never need a caretaker."

"Are you making me an offer of marriage?" he asked with a lowering brow.

"Oh, no, indeed!" she simpered. "That wouldn't be becoming in me. I'm only responding to your own words."

Rising, he said sternly, "No power on earth could induce me to marry you, and that would be plain enough if you were in your right mind. I shall not stand this foolishness another moment. You must go with me at once to Lemuel Weeks's. If you will not I'll have you taken to an insane asylum."

"To an insane asylum! What for?" she half-shrieked, springing to her feet.

"You'll see," he replied, going down the steps. "Jump up, Jane.—I shall now take the trunk to your cousin's. If you are so crazy as to stay in a man's house when he don't want you and won't have you, you are fit only for an asylum."

Mrs. Mumpson was sane enough to perceive that she was at the end of her adhesive resources. In his possession of her trunk, the farmer also had a strategic advantage which made it necessary for her to yield. She did so, however, with very bad grace. When he drove up, she bounced into the wagon as if made of india-rubber, while Jane followed slowly, with a look of sullen apathy. He touched his horses with the whip into a smart trot, scarcely daring to believe in his good fortune. The lane was rather steep and rough, and he soon had to pull up lest the object of his unhappy solicitude should be jolted out of the vehicle. This gave the widow her chance to open fire. "The end has not come yet, Mr. Holcroft," she said, vindictively. "You may think you are going to have an easy triumph over a poor, friendless, unfortunate, sensitive, afflicted woman and a fatherless child, but you shall soon learn that there's a law in the land. You have addressed improper words to me, you have threatened me, you have broken your agreement. I have writings, I have a memory, I have language to plead the cause

of the widow and the fatherless. I have been wronged, outraged, trampled upon, and then turned out of doors. The indignant world shall hear my story, the finger of scorn will be pointed at you. Your name will become a by-word and a hissing. Respecterble women, respecterbly connected, will stand aloof and shudder."

The torrent of words was unchecked except when the wheels struck a stone, jolting her so severely that her jaws came together with a click as if she were snapping at him.

He made no reply whatever, but longed to get his hands upon Lemuel Weeks. Pushing his horses to a high rate of speed, he soon reached that interested neighbor's door, intercepting him just as he was starting to town.

He looked very sour as he saw his wife's relatives, and demanded harshly, "What does this mean?"

"It means," cried Mrs. Mumpson, in her high, cackling tones, "that he's said things and done things too awful to speak of, that he's broken his agreement and turned us out of doors."

"Jim Holcroft," said Mr. Weeks, blustering up to the wagon, "you can't carry on with this high hand. Take these people back to your house where they belong or you'll be sorry."

Holcroft sprang out, whirled Mr. Weeks out of his way, took out the trunk, then with equal expedition and no more ceremony lifted down Mrs. Mumpson and Jane.

"Do you know what you're about?" shouted Mr. Weeks in a rage. "I'll have the law on you this very day."

Holcroft maintained his ominous silence as he hitched his horses securely. Then he strode toward Weeks, who backed away from him. "Oh, don't be afraid, you sneaking, cowardly fox," said the farmer, bitterly. "If I gave you your deserts, I'd take my horsewhip to you. You're going to law me, are you? Well, begin to-day, and I'll be ready for you. I won't demean myself by answering that woman, but I'm ready for you in any way you've a mind to come. I'll put you and your wife on the witness-stand. I'll sum-

mon cousin Abiram, as you call him, and his wife, and compel you all under oath to give Mrs. Mumpson a few testimonials. I'll prove the trick you played on me and the lies you told. I'll prove that this woman, in my absence, invaded my room, and with keys of her own opened my dead wife's bureau and pulled out her things. I'll prove that she hasn't earned her salt, and can't, and may prove something more. Now, if you want to go to law, begin. Nothing would please me better than to show up you and your tribe. I've offered to pay this woman her three months' wages in full and so have kept my agreement. She has not kept hers, for she's only sat in a rocking-chair and made trouble. Now, do as you please. I'll give you all the law you want. I'd like to add a horse-whipping, but that would give you a case and now you haven't any."

As Holcroft uttered these words sternly and slowly, like a man angry indeed but under perfect self-control, the perspiration broke out on Weeks's face. He was aware that Mrs. Mumpson was too well known to play the role of a wronged woman, and remembered what his testimony and that of many others would be under oath. Therefore, he began, "Oh, well, Mr. Holcroft, there's no need of your getting in such a rage and threatening so. I'm willing to talk the matter over and only want to do the square thing."

The farmer made a gesture of disgust as he said, "I understand you, Lemuel Weeks. There's no talking needed and I'm in no mood for it. Here's the money I agreed to pay. I'll give it to Mrs. Mumpson when she has signed this paper, and you've signed as witness of her signature. Otherwise, it's law. Now decide quick. I'm in a hurry."

Objections were interposed, and Holcroft, returning the money to his pocket, started for his team without a word. "Oh, well," said Weeks, in strong irritation, "I haven't time for a lawsuit at this season of the year. You are both cranks, and I suppose it would be best for me and my folks to be rid of you both. It's a pity, though, you couldn't be married and left to fight it out."

Holcroft took the whip from his wagon and said quietly, "If you speak another insulting word I'll horsewhip you and take my chances."

Something in the man's look prevented Weeks from uttering another unnecessary remark. The business was soon transacted, accompanied with Mrs. Mumpson's venomous words, for she had discovered that she could stigmatize Holcroft with impunity. He went to Jane and shook her hand as he said good-by. "I am sorry for *you* and I won't forget my promise;" then drove rapidly away.

"Cousin Lemuel," said Mrs. Mumpson, plaintively, "won't you have Timothy take my trunk to our room?"

"No, I won't," he snapped. "You've had your chance and have fooled it away. I was just going to town and you and Jane will go along with me," and he put the widow's trunk into his wagon.

Mrs. Weeks came out and wiped her eyes ostentatiously with her apron as she whispered, "I can't help it, Cynthy. When Lemuel goes off the handle in this way, it's no use for me to say anything."

Mrs. Mumpson wept hysterically as she was driven away. Jane's sullen and apathetic aspect had passed away in part, for Holcroft's words had kindled something like hope.

CHAPTER XVII

A MOMENTOUS DECISION

IT must be admitted that Holcroft enjoyed his triumph over Lemuel Weeks very much after the fashion of the aboriginal man. Indeed, he was almost sorry he had not been given a little more provocation, knowing well that had this been true his neighbor would have received a fuller return for his interested efforts. As he saw his farmhouse in the shimmering April sunlight, as the old churning dog came forward, wagging his tail, the farmer said, "This is the only place which can ever be home to me. Well, well, it's queer about people. Some, when they go, leave you desolate; others make you happy by their absence. I never dreamed that silly Mumpson could make me happy, but she has. Blessed if I don't feel happy! The first time in a year or more!" and he began to whistle old "Coronation" in the most lively fashion as he unharnessed his horses.

A little later, he prepared himself a good dinner and ate it in leisurely enjoyment, sharing a morsel now and then with the old dog. "You're a plaguy sight better company than she was," he mused. "That poor little stray cat of a Jane! What will become of her? Well, well, soon as she's old enough to cut loose from her mother I'll try to give her a chance, if it's a possible thing."

After dinner, he made a rough draught of an auction bill, offering his cows for sale, muttering as he did so, "Tom Watterly'll help me put it in better shape." Then he drove a mile away to see old Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. The former agreed for a small sum to mount guard with his dog during

the farmer's occasional absences, and the latter readily consented to do the washing and mending.

"What do I want of any more 'peculiar females,' as that daft widow called 'em?" he chuckled on his return. "Blamed if she wasn't the most peculiar of the lot. Think of me marrying her!" and the hillside echoed to his derisive laugh. "As I feel to-day, there's a better chance of my being struck by lightning than marrying, and I don't think any woman could do it in spite of me. I'll run the ranch alone."

That evening he smoked his pipe cheerfully beside the kitchen fire, the dog sleeping at his feet. "I declare," he said, smilingly, "I feel quite at home."

In the morning, after attending to his work, he went for old Jonathan Johnson and installed him in charge of the premises; then drove to the almshouse with all the surplus butter and eggs on hand. Tom Watterly arrived at the door with his fast trotting horse at the same time, and cried, "Hello, Jim, just in time. I'm a sort of grass widower to-day—been taking my wife out to see her sister. Come in and take pot-luck with me and keep up my spirits."

"Well, now, Tom," said Holcroft, shaking hands, "I'm glad, not that your wife's away, although it does make me down-hearted to contrast your lot and mine, but I'm glad you can give me a little time, for I want to use that practical head of yours—some advice, you know."

"All right. Nothing to do for an hour or two but eat dinner and smoke my pipe with you.—Here, Bill, take this team and feed 'em."

"Hold on," said Holcroft. "I'm not going to sponge on you. I've got some favors to ask, and I want you to take in return some butter half spoiled in the making and this basket of eggs. They're all right."

"Go to thunder! Holcroft, what do you take me for? When you've filled your pipe after dinner will you pull an egg out of your pocket and say, 'That's for a smoke?' No, no, I don't sell any advice to old friends like you. I'll

buy your butter and eggs at what they're worth and have done with 'em. Business is one thing, and sitting down and talking over an old crony's troubles is another. I'm not a saint, Jim, as you know—a man in politics can't be—but I remember when we were boys together and somehow thinking of those old days always fetches me. Come in, for dinner is a-waiting, I guess."

"Well, Tom, saint or no saint, I'd like to vote for you for gov'nor."

"This ain't an electioneering trick, as you know. I can play them off as well as the next feller when there's need, kiss the babies and all that."

Dinner was placed on the table immediately, and in a few moments the friends were left alone. Then Holcroft related in a half comic, half serious manner his tribulations with the help. Tom sat back in his chair and roared at the account of the pitched battle between the two widows, and the final smoking out of Mrs. Mumpson, but he reproached his friend for not having horsewhipped Lemuel Weeks. "Don't you remember, Jim, he was a sneaking, tricky chap when we were at school together? I licked him once, and it always does me good to think of it."

"I own it takes considerable to rile me to the point of striking a man, especially on his own land. His wife was looking out the window, too. If we'd been out in the road or anywhere else—but what's the use? I'm glad now it turned out as it has, for I've too much on my mind for lawsuits, and the less one has to do with such cattle as Weeks, the better. Well, you see I'm alone again, and I'm going to go it alone. I'm going to sell my cows and give up the dairy, and the thing I wanted help in most is the putting this auction bill in shape, also advice as to whether I had better try to sell here in town or up at the farm."

Tom shook his head dubiously and scarcely glanced at the paper. "Your scheme don't look practical to me," he said. "I don't believe you can run that farm alone without losing money. You'll just keep on going behind till the first

thing you know you'll clap a mortgage on it. Then you'll soon be done for. What's more, you'll break down if you try to do both outdoor and indoor work. Busy times will soon come, and you won't get your meals regularly: you'll be living on coffee and anything that comes handiest; your house will grow untidy and not fit to live in. If you should be taken sick, there'd be no one to do for you. Lumbermen, hunters, and such fellows can rough it alone awhile, but I never heard of a farm being run by man-power alone. Now as to selling out your stock, look at it. Grazing is what your farm's good for mostly. It's a pity you're so bent on staying there. Even if you didn't get very much for the place, from sale or rent, you'd have something that was sure. A strong, capable man like you could find something to turn your hand to. Then you could board in some respectable family, and not have to live like Robinson Crusoe. I've thought it over since we talked last, and if I was you I'd sell or rent."

"It's too late in the season to do either," said Holcroft, dejectedly. "What's more, I don't want to, at least not this year. I've settled that, Tom. I'm going to have one more summer on the old place, anyway, if I have to live on bread and milk."

"You can't make bread."

"I'll have it brought from town on the stage."

"Well, it's a pity some good, decent woman—there! how should I come to forget all about *her* till this minute? I don't know whether it would work. Perhaps it would. There's a woman here out of the common run. She has quite a story which I'll tell you in confidence. Then you can say whether you'd like to employ her or not. If you *will* stay on the farm, my advice is that you have a woman to do the housework, and me and Angy must try to find you one, if the one I have in mind won't answer. The trouble is, Holcroft, to get the right kind of a woman to live there alone with you, unless you married her. Nice women don't like to be talked about, and I don't blame 'em. The one

that's here, though, is so friendless and alone in the world that she might be glad enough to get a home almost anywheres."

"Well, well, tell me about her," said Holcroft, gloomily. "But I'm about discouraged in the line of women help."

Watterly told Alida's story with a certain rude pathos which touched the farmer's naturally kind heart, and he quite forgot his own need in indignation at the poor woman's wrongs. "It's a —— shame!" he said, excitedly, pacing the room. "I say, Tom, all the law in the land wouldn't keep me from giving that fellow a whipping or worse."

"Well, she won't prosecute; she won't face the public; she just wants to go to some quiet place and work for her bread. She don't seem to have any friends, or else she's too ashamed to let them know."

"Why, of course, I'd give such a woman a refuge till she could do better. What man wouldn't?"

"A good many wouldn't. What's more, if she went with you her story might get out, and you'd both be talked about."

"I don't care that for gossip," with a snap of his fingers. "You know I'd treat her with respect."

"What I know, and what other people would say, are two very different things. Neither you nor any one else can go too strongly against public opinion. Still, it's anybody's business," added Tom, thoughtfully. "Perhaps it's worth the trial. If she went I think she'd stay and do the best by you she could. Would you like to see her?"

"Yes."

Alida was summoned and stood with downcast eyes in the door. "Come in and take a chair," said Tom, kindly. "You know I promised to be on the lookout for a good place for you. Well, my friend here, Mr. Holcroft, whom I've known ever since I was a boy, wants a woman to do general housework and take care of the dairy."

She gave the farmer one of those swift, comprehensive glances by which women take in a personality, and said in a tone of regret, "But I don't understand dairy work."

"Oh, you'd soon learn. It's just the kind of a place you said you wanted, a lonely, out-of-the-way farm and no other help kept. What's more, my friend Holcroft is a kind, honest man. He'd treat you right. He knows all about your trouble and is sorry for you."

If Holcroft had been an ogre in appearance, he would have received the grateful glance which she now gave him as she said, "I'd be only too glad to work for you, sir, if you think I can do, or learn to do; what is required."

Holcroft, while his friend was speaking, had studied closely Alida's thin, pale face, and he saw nothing in it not in harmony with the story he had heard. "I am sorry for you," he said, kindly. "I believe you never meant to do wrong and have tried to do right. I will be perfectly honest with you. My wife is dead, the help I had has left me, and I live alone in the house. The truth is, too, that I could not afford to keep two in help and there would not be work for them both."

Alida had learned much in her terrible adversity, and had, moreover, the instincts of a class superior to the position she was asked to take. She bowed low to hide the burning flush that crimsoned her pale cheeks as she faltered, "It may seem strange to you, sirs, that one situated as I am should hesitate, but I have never knowingly done anything which gave people the right to speak against me. I do not fear work, I would humbly try to do my best, but—" she hesitated and rose as if to retire.

"I understand you," said Holcroft, kindly, "and I don't blame you for doing what you think is right."

"I'm very sorry, sir," she replied, tears coming into her eyes as she went out of the room.

"There it is, Holcroft," said Tom. "I believe she's just the one for you, but you can see she isn't of the common kind. She knows as well as you and me how people would talk, especially if her story came out, as like enough it will."

"Hang people!" snarled the farmer.

"Yes, a good lot of 'em deserve hanging, but it wouldn't

help you any just now. Perhaps she'd go with you if you got another girl or took an old woman from the house here to keep her company."

"I'm sick to death of such hags," said the farmer, with an impatient gesture. Then he sat down and looked at his friend as if a plan was forming in his mind of which he scarcely dared speak.

"Well, out with it," said Tom.

"Have you ever seen a marriage ceremony performed by a justice of the peace?" Holcroft asked, slowly.

"No, but they do it often enough. What! are you going to offer her marriage?"

"You say she is homeless and friendless?"

"Yes."

"And you believe she is just what she seems—just what her story shows her to be?"

"Yes. I've seen too many frauds to be taken in. She isn't a fraud. Neither does she belong to that miserable, wishy-washy, downhill class that sooner or later fetches up in a poorhouse. They say we're all made of dust, but some seem made of mud. You could see she was out of the common; and she's here on account of the wrong she received and not the wrong she did. I say all this in fairness to her; but when it comes to marrying her, that's another question."

"Tom, as I've told you, I don't want to marry. In fact, I couldn't go before a minister and promise what I'd have to. But I could do something like this. I could give this woman an honest name and a home. It would be marriage before the law. No one could ever say a word against either of us. I would be true and kind to her and she should share in my fortunes. That's all. You have often advised me to marry, and you know if I did it couldn't be anything else but a business affair. Then it ought to be done in a business-like way. You say I can't get along alone, and like enough you're right. I've learned more from this woman's manner than I have in a year, why I can't get and keep the

right kind of help, and I now feel if I could find a good, honest woman who would make my interests hers, and help me make a living in my own home, I'd give her my name and all the security which an honest name conveys. Now, this poor woman is in sore need and she might be grateful for what I can do, while any other woman would naturally expect me to promise more than I honestly can. Anyhow, I'd have to go through the form, and I can't and won't go and say sacred words—just about what I said when I married my wife—and know all the time I was lying."

"Well, Holcroft, you're a queer dick and this is a queer plan of yours. You're beyond my depth now and I can't advise."

"Why is it a queer plan? Things only seem odd because they are not common. As a matter of fact, you advise a business marriage. When I try to follow your advice honestly and not dishonestly you say I'm queer."

"I suppose if everybody became honest, it would be the queerest world ever known," said Tom, laughing. "Well, you might do worse than marry this woman. I can tell you that marrying is risky business at best. You know a justice will tie you just as tight as a minister, and while I've given you my impressions about this woman, I *know* little about her and you know next to nothing."

"I guess that would be the case, anyhow. If you set out to find a wife for me, where is there a woman that you actually do know more about? As for my going here and there, to get acquainted, it's out of the question. All my feelings rise up against such a course. Now, I feel sorry for this woman. She has at least my sympathy. If she is as friendless, poor and unhappy as she seems, I might do her as great a kindness as she would do for me if she could take care of my home. I wouldn't expect very much. It would be a comfort just to have some one in the house that wouldn't rob or waste, and who, knowing what her station was, would be content. Of course I'd have to talk it over with her and make my purpose clear. She might agree with

you that it's too queer to be thought of. If so, that would be the end of it."

"Well, Jim, you always finish by half talking me over to your side of a question. Now, if my wife was home, I don't believe she'd listen to any such plan."

"No, I suppose she wouldn't. She'd believe in people marrying and doing everything in the ordinary way. But neither I nor this woman is in ordinary circumstances. Do you know of a justice?"

"Yes, and you know him, too; Justice Harkins."

"Why certainly. He came from our town and I knew him when he was a boy, although I haven't seen much of him of late years."

"Well, shall I go and say to this woman—Alida Armstrong is her name now, I suppose—that you wish to see her again?"

"Yes, I shall tell her the truth. Then she can decide."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOLCROFT GIVES HIS HAND

ALIDA was seated by a window with some of the mending in which she assisted, and, as usual, was apart by herself. Watterly entered the large apartment quietly, and at first she did not observe him. He had time to note that she was greatly dejected, and when she saw him she hastily wiped tears from her eyes.

"You are a good deal cast down, Alida," he said, watching her closely.

"I've reason to be. I don't see any light ahead at all."

"Well, you know the old saying, 'It's darkest before day.' I want you to come with me again. I think I've found a chance for you."

She arose with alacrity and followed. As soon as they were alone, he turned and looked her squarely in the face as he said, gravely, "You have good commonsense, haven't you?"

"I don't know, sir," she faltered, perplexed and troubled by the question.

"Well, you can understand this much, I suppose. As superintendent of this house I have a responsible position which I could easily lose if I allowed myself to be mixed up with anything wrong or improper. To come right to the point, you don't know much about me and next to nothing of my friend Holcroft, but can't you see that even if I was a heartless, good-for-nothing fellow, it wouldn't be wise or safe for me to permit anything that wouldn't bear the light?"

"I think you are an honest man, sir. It would be strange

if I did not have confidence when you have judged me and treated me so kindly. But, Mr. Watterly, although helpless and friendless, I must try to do what I think is best. If I accepted Mr. Holcroft's position it might do him harm. You know how quick the world is to misjudge. It would seem to confirm everything that has been said against me," and the same painful flush again overspread her features.

"Well, Alida, all that you have to do is to listen patiently to my friend. Whether you agree with his views or not, you will see that he is a good-hearted, honest man. I want to prepare you for this talk by assuring you that I've known him since he was a boy, that he has lived all his life in this region and is known by many others, and that I wouldn't dare let him ask you to do anything wrong, even if I was bad enough."

"I'm sure, sir, you don't wish me any harm," she again faltered in deep perplexity.

"Indeed I don't. I don't advise my friend's course; neither do I oppose it. He's certainly old enough to act for himself. I suppose I'm a rough counsellor for a young woman, but since you appear to have so few friends I'm inclined to act as one. Just you stand on the question of right and wrong, and dismiss from your mind all foolish notions of what people will say. As a rule, all the people in the world can't do as much for us as somebody in particular. Now you go in the parlor and listen like a sensible woman. I'll be reading the paper, and the girl will be clearing off the table in the next room here."

Puzzled and trembling, Alida entered the apartment where Holcroft was seated. She was so embarrassed that she could not lift her eyes to him.

"Please sit down," he said, gravely, "and don't be troubled, much less frightened. You are just as free to act as ever you were in your life."

She sat down near the door, and compelled herself to look at him, for she felt instinctively that she might gather more from the expression of his face than from his words.

"Alida Armstrong is your name, Mr. Watterly tells me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Alida, I want to have a plain business talk with you. That's nothing to be nervous and worried about, you know. As I told you, I've heard your story. It has made me sorry for you instead of setting me against you. It has made me respect you as a right-minded woman, and I shall give you good proof that my words are true. At the same time, I shan't make any false pretences to what isn't true and couldn't be true. Since I've heard your story, it's only fair you should hear mine, and I ought to tell it first."

He went over the past very briefly until he came to the death of his wife. There was simple and homely pathos in the few sentences with which he referred to this event. Then more fully he enlarged upon his efforts and failure to keep house with hired help. Unconsciously, he had taken the best method to enlist her sympathy. The secluded cottage and hillside farm became realities to her fancy. She saw how the man's heart clung to his home, and his effort to keep it touched her deeply.

"Oh," she thought, "I do wish there was some way for me to go there. The loneliness of the place which drove others away is the chief attraction for me. Then it would be pleasant to work for such a man and make his home comfortable for him. It's plain from his words and looks that he's as honest and straightforward as the day is long. He only wants to keep his home and make his living in peace."

As he had talked, her nervous embarrassment passed away, and the deep sense of her own need was pressing upon her again. She saw that he also was in great need. His business talk was revealing deep trouble and perplexity. With the quick intuitions of a woman, her mind went far beyond his brief sentences, and saw all the difficulties of his lot. His feeling reference to the loss of his wife proved that he was not a coarse-natured man. As he spoke so plainly of his life during the past year, her mind was insensibly abstracted from everything but his want and hers, and she

thought his farmhouse afforded just the secluded refuge she craved. As he drew near the end of his story, and hesitated in visible embarrassment, she mustered courage to say, timidly, "Would you permit a suggestion from me?"

"Why certainly."

"You have said, sir, that your business and means would not allow you to keep two in help, and as you have been speaking I have tried to think of some way. The fact that your house is so lonely is just the reason why I should like to work in it. As you can understand, I have no wish to meet strangers. Now, sir, I am willing to work for very little; I should be glad to find such a quiet refuge for simply my board and clothes, and I would do my very best and try to learn what I did not know. It seems to me that if I worked for so little you might think you could afford to hire some elderly woman also?" and she looked at him in the eager hope that he would accept her proposition.

He shook his head as he replied, "I don't know of any such person. I took the best one in this house, and you know how she turned out."

"Perhaps Mr. Watterly may know of some one else," she faltered. She was now deeply troubled and perplexed again, supposing that he was about to renew his first proposition that she should be his only help.

"If Mr. Watterly did know of any one I would make the trial, but he does not. Your offer is very considerate and reasonable, but—" and he hesitated again, scarcely knowing how to go on.

"I am sorry, sir," she said, rising, as if to end the interview.

"Stay," he said, "you do not understand me yet. Of course I should not make you the same offer that I did at first, after seeing your feeling about it, and I respect you all the more because you so respect yourself. What I had in mind was to give you my name, and it's an honest name. If we were married, it would be perfectly proper for you to go with me, and no one could say a word against either of us."

"Oh!" she gasped, in strong agitation and surprise.

"Now don't be so taken aback. It's just as easy for you to refuse as it is to speak, but listen first. What seems strange and unexpected may be the most sensible thing for us both. You have your side of the case to think of just as truly as I have mine; and I'm not forgetting, and I don't ask you to forget, that I'm still talking business. You and I have both been through too much trouble and loss to say any silly nonsense to each other. You've heard my story, yet I'm almost a stranger to you as you are to me. We'd both have to take considerable on trust. Yet I know I'm honest and well-meaning, and I believe you are. Now look at it. Here we are, both much alone in the world—both wishing to live a retired, quiet life. I don't care a rap for what people say as long as I'm doing right, and in this case they'd have nothing to say. It's our own business. I don't see as people will ever do much for you, and a good many would impose on you and expect you to work beyond your strength. They might not be very kind or considerate, either. I suppose you've thought of this?"

"Yes," she replied with bowed head. "I should meet coldness, probably harshness and scorn."

"Well, you'd never meet anything of the kind in my house. I would treat you with respect and kindness. At the same time, I'm not going to mislead you by a word. You shall have a chance to decide in view of the whole truth. My friend, Mr. Watterly, has asked me more'n once, 'Why don't you marry again?' I told him I had been married once, and that I couldn't go before a minister and promise the same things over again when they wasn't true. I can't make to you any promises or say any words that are not true, and I don't ask or expect you to do what I can't do. But it has seemed to me that our condition was out of the common lot—that we could take each other for just what we might be to each other and no more. You would be my wife in name, and I do not ask you to be my wife in more than name. You would thus secure a good home and the

care and protection of one who would be kind to you, and I would secure a housekeeper—one that would stay with me and make my interests hers. It would be a fair, square arrangement between ourselves and nobody else's business. By taking this course, we don't do any wrong to our feelings or have to say or promise anything that isn't true."

"Yet I can't help saying, sir," she replied, in strong, yet repressed agitation, "that your words sound very strange; and it seems stranger still that you can offer marriage of any kind to a woman situated as I am. You know my story, sir," she added, crimsoning, "and all may soon know it. You would suffer wrong and injury."

"I offer you open and honorable marriage before the world, and no other kind. Mr. Watterly and others—as many as you pleased—would witness it, and I'd have you given a certificate at once. As for your story, it has only awakened my sympathy. You have not meant to do any wrong. Your troubles are only another reason in my mind for not taking any advantage of you or deceiving you in the least. Look the truth squarely in the face. I'm bent on keeping my house and getting my living as I have done, and I need a housekeeper that will be true to all my interests. Think how I've been robbed and wronged, and what a dog's life I've lived in my own home. You need a home, a support and a protector. I couldn't come to you or go to any other woman and say honestly more than this. Isn't it better for people to be united on the ground of truth than to begin by telling a pack of lies?"

"But—but can people be married with such an understanding by a minister? Wouldn't it be deceiving him?"

"I shall not ask you to deceive any one. Any marriage that either you or I could now make would be practically a business marriage. I should therefore take you, if you were willing, to a justice and have a legal or civil marriage performed, and this would be just as binding as any other in the eye of the law. It is often done. This would be much

better to my mind, than if people, situated as we are, went to a church or a minister."

"Yes, yes, I couldn't do that."

"Well, now, Alida," he said, with a smile that wonderfully softened his rugged features, "you are free to decide. It may seem to you a strange sort of courtship, but we are both too old for much foolishness. I never was sentimental, and it would be ridiculous to begin now. I'm full of trouble and perplexity, and so are you. Are you willing to be my wife so far as an honest name goes, and help me make a living for us both? That's all I ask. I, in my turn, would promise to treat you with kindness and respect, and give you a home as long as I lived and to leave you all I have in the world if I died. That's all I could promise. I'm a lonely, quiet man, and like to be by myself. I wouldn't be much society for you. I've said more to-day than I might in a month, for I felt that it was due to you to know just what you were doing."

"Oh, sir," said Alida, trembling, and with tears in her eyes, "you do not ask much and you offer a great deal. If you, a strong man, dread to leave your home and go out into the world you know not where, think how terrible it is for a weak, friendless woman to be worse than homeless. I have lost everything, even my good name."

"No, no, not in my eyes."

"Oh, I know, I know," she cried, wringing her hands. "Even these miserable paupers like myself have made me feel it. They have burned the truth into my brain and heart. Indeed, sir, you do not realize what you are doing or asking. It is not fit or meet that I should bear your name. You might be sorry, indeed."

"Alida," said Holcroft, gravely, "I've not forgotten your story, and you shouldn't forget mine. Be sensible now. Don't I look old enough to know what I'm about?"

"Oh, oh, oh," she cried, impetuously, "if I were only sure it was right! It may be business to you, but it seems like life or death to me. It's more than death—I don't

fear that—but I do fear life, I do fear the desperate struggle just to maintain a bare, dreary existence. I do dread going out among strangers and seeing their cold curiosity and their scorn. You can't understand a woman's heart. It isn't right for me to die. I will God takes me, but life has seemed so horrible, meeting suspicion on one side and cruel significant looks of knowledge on the other. I've been tortured even here by these wretched hags, and I've envied even them, so near to death, yet not shamed like me. I know, and you should know, that my heart is broken, crushed, trampled into the mire. I had felt that for me even the thought of marriage again would be a mockery, a wicked thing, which I would never have a right to entertain. I never dreamed that any one would think of such a thing, knowing what you know. Oh, oh, why have you tempted me so if it is not right? I must do right. The feeling that I've not meant to do wrong is all that has kept me from despair. But can it be right to let you take me from the street, the poorhouse, with nothing to give but a blighted name, a broken heart and feeble hands! See, I am but the shadow of what I was and a dark shadow at that. I could be only a dismal shadow at any man's hearth. Oh, oh, I've thought and suffered until my reason seemed going. You don't realize, you don't know the depths into which I've fallen. It can't be right."

Holcroft was almost appalled at this passionate outburst in one who thus far had been sad, indeed, yet self-controlled. He looked at her in mingled pity and consternation. His own troubles had seemed heavy enough, but he now caught glimpses of something far beyond trouble, of agony, of mortal dread that bordered on despair. He could scarcely comprehend how terrible to a woman like Alida were the recent events of her life, and how circumstances, with illness, had all tended to create a morbid horror of her situation. Like himself, she was naturally reticent in regard to her deeper feelings, patient and undemonstrative. Had not his words evoked this outburst she might have suffered and died in

silence, but in this final conflict between conscience and hope, the hot lava of her heart had broken forth. So little was he then able to understand her, that suspicions crossed his mind. Perhaps his friend Watterly had not heard the true story or else not the whole story. But his straightforward simplicity stood him in good stead, and he said, gently, "Alida, you say I don't know, I don't realize. I believe you will tell me the truth. You went to a minister and was married to a man that you thought you had a right to marry—"

"You shall know it all from my own lips," she said, interrupting him; "you have a right to know; and then you will see that it cannot be," and with bowed head, and low, rapid, passionate utterance, she poured out her story. "That woman, his wife," she concluded, "made me feel that I was of the scum and offscouring of the earth, and they've made me feel so here, too—even these wretched paupers. So the world will look on me till God takes me to my mother. Oh, thank God! she don't know. Don't you see, now?" she asked, raising her despairing eyes, from which agony had dried all tears. "Yes, I see you do," she added, desperately, "for even you have turned from me."

"Confound it!" cried Holcroft, standing up and searching his pockets for a handkerchief, "I—I—I'd like—like to choke that fellow. If I could get my hands on him, there'd be trouble. Turn away from you, you poor wronged creature! Don't you see I'm so sorry for you that I'm making a fool of myself? I, who couldn't shed a tear over my own troubles—there, there—come now, let us be sensible. Let's get back to business, for I can't stand this kind of thing at all. I'm so confused betwixt rage at him and pity for you—Let me see; this is where we were; I want some one to take care of my home, and you want a home. That's all there is about it now. If you say so, I'll make you Mrs. Holcroft in an hour."

"I did not mean to work upon your sympathies, only to tell you the truth. God bless you, that the impulses of your

heart are so kind and merciful. But let me be true to you as well as to myself. Go away and think it all over calmly and quietly. Even for the sake of being rescued from a life that I dread far more than death, I cannot let you do that which you may regret unspeakably. Do not think I misunderstand your offer. It's the only one I could think of, and I would not have thought of it if you had not spoken. I have no heart to give. I could be a wife only in name, but I could work like a slave for protection from a cruel, jeering world; I could hope for something like peace and respite from suffering if I only had a safe refuge. But I must not have these if it is not right and best. Good to me must not come through wrong to you."

"Tush! tush! you mustn't talk so. I can't stand it at all. I've heard your story. It's just as I supposed at first, only a great deal more so. Why, of course it's all right. It makes me believe in Providence, it all turns out so entirely for our mutual good. I can do as much to help you as you to help me. Now let's get back on the sensible, solid ground from which we started. The idea of my wanting you to work like a slave! Like enough, some people would, and then you'd soon break down and be brought back here again. No, no, I've explained just what I wish and just what I mean. You must get over the notion that I'm a sentimental fool, carried away by my feelings. How Tom Watterly would laugh at the idea! My mind is made up now just as much as it would be a week hence. This is no place for you, and I don't like to think of your being here. My spring work is pressing, too. Don't you see that by doing what I ask you can set me right on my feet and start me uphill again after a year of miserable downhill work? You have only to agree to what I've said, and you will be at home to-night and I'll be quietly at my work to-morrow. Mr. Watterly will go with us to the justice who has known me all my life. Then, if any one ever says a word against you he'll have me to settle with. Come, Alida, here's a strong hand that's able to take care of you."

She hesitated a moment, then clasped it like one who is sinking, and before he divined her purpose, she kissed and bedewed it with tears.

CHAPTER XIX

A BUSINESS MARRIAGE

WHILE Holcroft's sympathies had been deeply touched by the intense emotion of gratitude which had overpowered Alida, he had also been disturbed and rendered somewhat anxious. He was actually troubled lest the woman he was about to marry should speedily begin to love him, and develop a tendency to manifest her affection in a manner that would seem to him extravagant and certainly disagreeable. Accustomed all his life to repress his feelings, he wondered at himself and could not understand how he had given way so unexpectedly. He was not sufficiently versed in human nature to know that the depth of Alida's distress was the adequate cause. If there had been a false or an affected word, he would have remained cool enough. In his inability to gauge his own nature as well as hers, he feared lest this business-like marriage was verging toward sentiment on her part. He did not like her kissing his hand. He was profoundly sorry for her, but so he would have been for any other woman suffering under the burden of a great wrong. He felt that it would be embarrassing if she entertained sentiments toward him which he could not reciprocate, and open manifestations of regard would remind him of that horror of his life, Mrs. Mumpson. He was not incapable of quick, strong sympathy in any instance of genuine trouble, but he was one of those men who would shrink in natural recoil from any marked evidence of a woman's preference unless the counterpart of her regard existed in his own breast.

To a woman of Alida's intuition the way in which he

withdrew his hand and the expression of his face had a world of meaning. She would not need a second hint. Yet she did not misjudge him; she knew that he meant what he had said and had said all that he meant. She was also aware that he had not and never could understand the depths of fear and suffering from which his hand was lifting her. Her gratitude was akin to that of a lost soul saved, and that was all she had involuntarily expressed. She sat down again and quietly dried her eyes, while in her heart she purposed to show her gratitude by patient assiduity in learning to do what he required.

Holcroft was now bent upon carrying out his plan as quickly as possible and returning home. He therefore asked, "Can you go with me at once, Alida?"

She simply bowed her acquiescence.

"That's sensible. Perhaps you had better get your things ready while I and Mr. Watterly go and arrange with Justice Harkins."

Alida averted her face with a sort of shame which a woman feels who admits such a truth. "I haven't anything, sir, but a hat and cloak to put on. I came away and left everything."

"And I'm glad of it," said Holcroft, heartily. "I wouldn't want you to bring anything which that scoundrel gave you." He paced the room thoughtfully a moment or two and then called Watterly in. "It's settled, Tom. Alida will be Mrs. Holcroft as soon as we can see the justice. Do you think we could persuade him to come here?"

"One thing at a time.—Mrs. Holcroft—I may as well call you so, for when my friend says he'll do a thing he does it—I congratulate you. I think you are well out of your troubles. Since you are to marry my old friend, we must be friends, too," and he shook her heartily by the hand.

His words and manner were another ray of light—a welcome rift in the black pall that had gathered round her.

"You were the first friend I found, sir, after—after what happened," she said, gratefully.

"Well, you've found another and a better one; and he'll always be just the same. Any woman might be glad—"

"Come, Tom, no more of that. I'm a plain old farmer that does what he agrees, and that's all there is about it. I've told Alida just what I wished and could do—"

"I should hope so," interrupted Watterly, laughing. "You've taken time enough, certainly, and I guess you've talked more than you have before in a year."

"Yes, I know I'm almost as bad as an oyster about talking except when I'm with you. Somehow, we've always had a good deal to say to each other. In this case, I felt that it was due to Alida that she should know all about me and understand fully just how I felt concerning this marriage. The very fact that she hasn't friends to advise her made it all the more needful that I should be plain and not mislead her in any respect. She has just as good a right to judge and act for herself as any woman in the land, and she takes me and I take her with no sentimental lies to start with. Now let's get back to business. I rather think, since Harkins was an old acquaintance of mine, he'll come up here and marry us, don't you?—Alida, wouldn't you rather be married here quietly than face a lot of strangers? You can have your own way. I don't care now if half the town was present."

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir. I don't want to meet strangers—and—and—I'm not very strong yet. I thank you for considering my feelings so kindly."

"Why, that's my duty," replied the farmer. "Come, Watterly, the sun is getting low, and we've considerable to do yet before we start home."

"I'm with you.—Now, Alida, you go back quietly and act as if nothing had happened till I send for you. Of course this impatient young groom will hurry back with the justice as fast as possible. Still, we may not find him, or he may be so busy that we shall have to come back for you and take you to his office."

As she turned to leave the room, Holcroft gave her his

hand and said, kindly, "Now don't you be nervous or worried. I see you are not strong, and you shall not be taxed any more than I can help. Good-by for a little while."

Meantime, Watterly stepped out a moment and gave his domestic a few orders; then he accompanied Holcroft to the barn and the horses were soon attached to the market-wagon. "You're in for it now, Jim, sure enough," he said, laughing. "What will Angy say to it all?"

"Tell her that I say you've been a mighty good friend to me, yet I hope I may never return any favors of the same kind."

"By jocks! I hope not. I guess it's just as well she was away. She'll think we've acted just like two harum-scarum men, and will be awfully scandalized over your marrying this woman. Don't you feel a little nervous about it?"

"No! when my mind's made up, I don't worry. Nobody else need lie awake, for it's my affair."

"Well, Jim, you know how I feel about it, but I've got to say something and I might as well say it plain."

"That's the only way you ought to say it."

"Well, you talked long enough to give me plenty of time to think. One thing is clear, Angy won't take to this marriage. You know I'd like to have you both come in and take a meal as you always have done, but then a man must keep peace with his wife, and—"

"I understand, Tom. We won't come till Mrs. Watterly asks us."

"But you won't have hard feelings?"

"No, indeed. Ain't you doing your level best as a friend?"

"Well, you know women are so set about these things, and Angy is rather hard on people who don't come up to her mark of respectability. What's more, I suppose you'll find that others will think and act as she does. If you cared about people's opinions I should have been dead against it, but as you feel and are situated, I'm hanged if I don't think she's just the one."

"If it hadn't been this one, I don't believe it would have been any one. Here we are," and he tied his horse before the office of the justice.

Mr. Harkins greeted Holcroft with a sort of patronizing cordiality and was good enough to remember that they had been at the little country schoolhouse together. In Watterly he heartily recognized a brother politician who controlled a goodly number of votes.

When Holcroft briefly made known his errand, the justice gave a great guffaw of laughter and said, "Oh, bring her here, and I'll invite in some of the boys as witnesses."

"I'm not afraid of all the witnesses that you could crowd into a ten-acre lot," said Holcroft, somewhat sternly, "but there is no occasion to invite the boys, whoever they are, or any one else. She doesn't want to be stared at. I was in hopes, Mr. Harkins, that you'd ride up to the almshouse with us and quietly marry us there."

"Well, I guess you'd better bring her here. I'm pretty busy this afternoon, and—"

"See here, Ben," said Watterly, taking the justice aside, "Holcroft is my friend, and you know I'm mighty thick with my friends. They count more with me than my wife's relations. Now I want you to do what Holcroft wishes, as a personal favor to me, and the time will come when I can make it up to you."

"Oh, certainly, Watterly. I didn't understand," replied Harkins, who looked upon Holcroft as a close, and as he would phrase it, no-account farmer, from whom he could never expect even a vote. "I'll go with you at once. It's but a short job."

"Well," said Holcroft, "how short can you make it?"

"Let me get my book," and he took from a shelf the "Justice's Assistant." "You can't want anything shorter than this?" and he read, 'By this act of joining hands you do take each other as husband and wife and solemnly engage in the presence of these witnesses to love and honor and comfort and cherish each other as such so long as you both

"HERE'S A STRONG HAND THAT'S ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU."

Page 169.

shall live. Therefore, in accordance with the law of the State of New York I do hereby pronounce you husband and wife.' A sailor couldn't tie a knot quicker than that."

"I guess you can, justice," said Holcroft, taking the book. "Suppose you only read this much. 'By this act of joining hands you do take each other as husband and wife. Therefore, in acordance with the law, etc.' Would that be a legal marriage?"

"Certainly. You'd have to go to a divorce court to get out of that."

It's my purpose to keep out of courts of all kinds. I'll thank you to read just that much and no more. I don't want to say anything that isn't exactly true."

"You see how it is, Ben. Holcroft hasn't known the woman long, and she's a nice woman, too, if she is boarding at my hotel. Holcroft needs a wife—must have one, in fact, to help run his house and dairy. It wasn't exactly a love match, you know, and he's that kind of a man that a yoke of oxen couldn't draw a word out of him that he didn't mean."

"Yes, yes, I see now," said Harkins. "I'll read just what you say and no more."

"And I'll have a little spread that we can be longer at than the ceremony," added Watterly, who was inclined to be a little hilarious over the affair.

Holcroft, however, maintained his grave manner, and when they reached the almshouse he took Watterly aside and said, "See here, Tom, you've been a good friend to-day and seconded me in everything. Now let the affair pass off just as quietly and seriously as possible. She's too cast down for a gay wedding. Suppose we had a daughter who'd been through such an experience—a nice, good, modest girl. Her heart's too sore for fun and jokes. My marrying her is much the same as pulling her out of deep water in which she was sinking."

"You're right, Jim. I don't think, and one doesn't have much cause to be so sparing of the feelings of such creatures

as come here. But she's out of the common run, and I ought to have remembered it. By jocks! You're mighty careful about promising to love, cherish and obey, and all that, but I guess you'll do a sight more than many who do promise."

"Of course I'm going to be kind. That's my duty. Give Harkins a hint. Tell him that she's lost her mother. He needn't know when the old lady died, but it will kind of solemnize him."

Watterly did as requested, and Harkins, now convinced that his political interest could be furthered by careful compliance with all requirements, put on a grave, official air and was ready for business.

'Alida was sent for. She was too agitated to say farewell to any of the poor creatures with whom she had been compelled to associate—even to the few who, though scarcely sane, had manifested tenderness and affection. She had felt that she must reserve all her strength for the coming ordeal, which she both welcomed and feared inexpressibly. She knew how critical was the step she was taking and how much depended on it, yet the more she thought, the more it seemed to her as if Providence had, as by a miracle, given her a refuge. Holcroft's businesslike view of the marriage comforted her greatly, and she asked God to give her health and strength to work faithfully for him many years.

But she had sad misgivings as she followed the messenger, for she felt so weak that she could scarcely walk. It was indeed a pallid, sorrowful, trembling bride that entered Mr. Watterly's parlor. Holcroft met her and taking her hand, said, kindly, "Courage. It will be over in a minute."

She was so pale and agitated that the justice asked, "Do you enter into this marriage freely and without compulsion of any kind?"

"Please let me sit down a moment," she faltered, and Watterly hastened to give her a chair. She fixed her eyes on Holcroft and said, anxiously, "You see, sir, how weak I am. I have been sick and—and I fear I am far from being

well now. I fear you will be disappointed—that it is not right to you, and that I may not be able—"

"Alida," interrupted Holcroft, gravely, "I'm not one to break my word. Home and quiet will soon restore you. Answer the justice and tell him the exact truth."

No elixir could have brought hope and courage like that word "home." She rose at once and said to Harkins, "I have consented to Mr. Holcroft's wishes with feelings of the deepest gratitude."

"Very well. Join hands."

She hesitated and looked for a moment at Holcroft with strange intensity.

"It's all right, Alida," he said with a smile. "Come."

His perfect honesty and steadfastness of purpose stood him in good stead then, for she came at once to his side and took his hand.

Justice Harkins solemnly opened his big book and read, "'By this act of joining hands you do take each other as husband and wife. Therefore, in accordance with the law of the State of New York, I do hereby pronounce you husband and wife.' That's all."

"I don't think you'll ever be sorry, Alida," said Holcroft, pressing her hand as he led her to a chair. Watterly again bustled up with congratulations, and then said, "You must all come out now to a little supper, and also remember that it was gotten up in a hurry."

The domestic stared at Alida and Holcroft, and then, surmising what had taken place, was so excited that she could scarcely wait on the guests.

Holcroft, with the simple tact which genuine kindness usually suggests, was attentive to his bride, but managed, by no slight effort for him, to engage the two men in general conversation, so that Alida might have time to recover her composure. His quiet, matter-of-fact bearing was re-assuring in itself. A cup of strong tea and a little old currant wine, which Watterly insisted on her taking, brightened her up not a little. Indeed, her weakness was now largely due

to the want of nourishment suited to her feeble condition. Moreover, both nerves and mind found relief and rest in the consciousness that the decisive step had been taken. She was no longer shuddering and recoiling from a past in which each day had revealed more disheartening elements. Her face was now toward a future that promised a refuge, security, and even hope.

The quiet meal was soon over. Holcroft put a five dollar bill in the hands of the justice, who filled in a certificate and departed, feeling that the afternoon had not been spent in vain.

"Jim," said Watterly, drawing his friend aside, "you'll want to make some purchases. You know she's only what she wears. How are you off for money?"

"Well, Tom, you know I didn't expect anything of this kind when—"

"Of course I know it. Will fifty answer?"

"Yes. You're a good friend. I'll return it in a day or two."

"Return it when you're a mind to.—I say, Alida, I want you to take this. Jim Holcroft can't get married and his bride not receive a present from me," and he put ten dollars in her hand.

Tears rushed to her eyes as she turned them inquiringly to Holcroft to know what she should do.

"Now see here, Tom, you've done too much for us already."

"Shut up, Jim Holcroft. Don't you end the day by hurting my feelings. It's perfectly right and proper for me to do this.—Good-by, Alida. I don't believe you'll ever be sorry you found your way to my hotel."

Alida took his proffered hand, but could only falter, "I —I can never forget."

CHAPTER XX

UNCLE JONATHAN'S IMPRESSION OF THE BRIDE

"NOW, Alida," said Holcroft, as they drove away, "remember that we are two middle-aged, sensible people. At least I'm middle-aged and fairly sensible, too, I hope. You'll need to buy some things and I want you to get all you need. Don't stint yourself, and you needn't hurry so as to get tired, for we shall have moonlight and there's no use trying to get home before dark. Is there any particular store which you'd like to go to?"

"No, sir, only I'd rather go over on the east side of town where I'm not known."

"That suits me, for it's the side nearest home and I *am* known there."

"Perhaps—perhaps you also would rather go this evening where you are not known," she said, hesitatingly.

"It makes no difference to me. In fact, I know of a place where you'll have a good choice at reasonable rates."

"I'll go where you wish," she said, quietly.

They soon entered a large shop together, and the proprietor said, pleasantly, "Good evening, Mr. Holcroft."

"Good evening, Mr. Jasper. My wife wants to get some things. If you'll be good enough to wait on her I'll step out to do two or three errands."

The merchant looked curiously at Alida, but was too polite to ask questions or make comments on her very simple purchases. Her old skill and training were of service now. She knew just what she absolutely needed and bought no more.

Holcroft laid in a good stock of groceries and some juicy beef and then returned. When Mr. Jasper gave him his bill, he went to Alida, who was resting, and said in a low voice, "This won't do at all. You can't have bought half enough."

For the first time, something like a smile flitted across her face, as she replied, "It's enough to begin with. I know."

"Really, Mr. Holcroft, I didn't know you were married," said the merchant. "I must congratulate you."

"Well, I am. Thank you. Good-night."

A few moments later, he and his wife were bowling out of town toward the hills. Reaching one of these, the horses came down to a walk and Holcroft turned and said, "Are you very tired, Alida? I'm troubled about you taking this long ride. You have been so sick."

"I'm sorry I'm not stronger, sir, but the fresh air seems to do me good and I think I can stand it."

"You didn't promise to obey me, did you?" with a rather nervous little laugh.

"No, sir, but I will."

"That's a good beginning. Now see what an old tyrant I am. In the first place, I don't want you to say "sir" to me any more. My name is James. In the second place, you must work only as I let you. Your first business is to get strong and well, and you know we agreed to marry on strictly business grounds."

"I understand it well, but I think you are very kind for a business man."

"Oh, as to that, if I do say it of myself, I don't think it's my nature to be hard on those who treat me square. I think we shall be very good friends in our quiet way, and that's more than can be said of a good many who promise more than they seem to remember afterward."

"I will try to do all you wish, for I am very grateful."

"If you do, you may find I'm as grateful as you are."

"That can never be. Your need and mine were very

different. But I shall try to show my gratitude by learning your ways and wishes and not by many words of thanks."

"Thank the Lord!" mentally ejaculated the farmer, "there's no Mrs. Mumpson in this case;" but he only said, kindly, "I think we understand each other now, Alida. I'm not a man of words either, and I had better show by actions also what I am. The fact is, although we are married, we are scarcely acquainted, and people can't get acquainted in a day."

The first long hill was surmounted and away they bowled again, past cottage and farmhouse, through strips of woodland and between dusky fields from which came the fragrance of the springing grass and the peepings of the hylas. The moon soon rose, full-orbed, above the higher eastern hills, and the mild April evening became luminous and full of beauty.

A healing sense of quiet and security already began to steal into Alida's bruised heart. In turning her back upon the town in which she had suffered so greatly, she felt like one escaping from prison and torture. An increasing assurance of safety came with every mile; the cool, still radiance of the night appeared typical of her new and most unexpected experience. Light had risen on her shadowed path, but it was not warm, vivifying sunlight which stimulates and develops. A few hours before, she was in darkness which might be felt—yet it was a gloom shot through and through with lurid, threatening gleams. It had seemed to her that she had fallen from home, happiness and honor to unfathomed depths, and yet there had appeared to be deeper and darker abysses on every side. She had shuddered at the thought of going out into the world, feeling that her misfortune would awaken suspicion rather than sympathy, scorn instead of kindness; that she must toil on until death, to sustain a life to which death would come as God's welcome messenger. Then had come this man at her side, with his comparatively trivial troubles and perplexities, and he had asked her help—she who was so helpless. He had banished

despair from her earthly future, he had lifted her up and was bearing her away from all which she had so dreaded; nothing had been asked which her crushed spirit was unable to bestow; she was simply expected to aid him in his natural wish to keep his home and to live where he had always dwelt. His very inability to understand her, to see her broken, trampled life and immeasurable need as she saw it, brought quietness of mind. The concentration of his thoughts on a few homely and simple hopes gave her immunity. With quick intuition, she divined that she had not a whimsical, jealous, exacting nature to deal with. He was the plain, matter-of-fact man he seemed, so literal and absolutely truthful that he would appear odd to most people. To her mind, his were the traits which she could now most welcome and value. He knew all about her, she had merely to be herself, to do what she had promised, in order to rest securely on his rock-like truth. He had again touched a deep, grateful chord in speaking of her to the shopkeeper as his wife; he showed no disposition whatever to shrink from the relation before the world; it was evident that he meant to treat her with respect and kindness, and to exact respect from others. For all this, while sitting quietly and silently at his side, she thanked him almost passionately in her heart; but far more than for all this she was glad and grateful that he would not expect what she now felt it would be impossible for her to give—the love and personal devotion which had been inseparable from marriage in her girlhood thoughts. He would make good his words—she would be his wife in name and be respected as such. He was too simple and true to himself and his buried love, too considerate of her, to expect more. She might hope, therefore, as he had said, that they might be helpful, loyal friends, and he would have been surprised indeed had he known how the pale, silent woman beside him was longing and hoping to fill his home with comfort.

Thoughts like these had inspired and sustained her while at the same time administering the balm of hope. The quiet

face of nature, lovely in the moonlight, seemed to welcome and reassure her. Happy are those who, when sorely wounded in life, can turn to the natural world and find in every tree, shrub and flower a comforting friend that will not turn from them. Such are not far from God and peace.

The range of Holcroft's thoughts was far simpler and narrower than Alida's. He turned rather deliberately from the past, preferring to dwell on the probable consummation of his hope. His home, his farm, were far more to him than the woman he had married. He had wedded her for their sake, and his thoughts followed his heart, which was in his hillside acres. It is said that women often marry for a home; he truly had done so to keep his home. The question which now most occupied him was the prospect of doing this through quiet, prosperous years. He dwelt minutely on Alida's manner, as well as her words, and found nothing to shake his belief that she had been as truthful as himself. Nevertheless, he queried in regard to the future with not a little anxiety. In her present distress and poverty she might naturally be glad of the refuge he had offered; but as time passed, and the poignancy of bitter memories was allayed, might not her life on the farm seem monotonous and dull, might not weariness and discontent come into her eyes in place of gratitude? "Well, well," he concluded, "this marrying is a risky experiment at best, but Tom Watterly's talk and her manner seemed to shut me up to it. I was made to feel that I couldn't go on in any other way; and I haven't done anything underhanded or wrong, as I see, for the chance of going on. If I hadn't become such a heathen, I should say there was a Providence in it, but I don't know what to think about such things any more. Time'll show, and the prospect is better than it has been yet. She'll never be sorry if she carries out the agreement made to-day, if kindness and good-will can repay her."

Thus it may be seen that although two life currents had become parallel, they were still very distinct.

By the time Holcroft approached the lane leading to his

dwelling Alida was growing very weary, and felt that her endurance had almost reached its limit. Her face was so white in the moonlight that he asked, solicitously, "You can stand it a little longer, can't you?"

"I'll try. I'm very sorry I'm not stronger."

"Don't you worry about that. You won't know yourself in a week. Here we are at the lane and there's the house yonder. A moment or two more and you'll be by the fire."

A loud barking startled old Jonathan Johnson out of his doze, and he hastened to replenish the fire and to call off his rather savage dog. He was a little surprised to see Holcroft driving toward the kitchen door with a woman by his side. "He's tried his luck with anuther of them town gals," he muttered, "but, Jerusalem! she won't stay a week, an' my old woman'll have the washin' an mendin' all the same."

He could scarcely believe his ears and eyes when he heard the farmer say, "Alida, you must let me lift you out," and then saw the "town gal" set gently on the ground, her hand placed on Holcroft's arm as she was supported slowly and carefully to the rocking-chair beside the fire.

"Jonathan," was the quiet announcement, "this is Mrs. Holcroft, my wife."

"Jeru—beg a pardon. Wasn't spectin' jis' sich a turn o' things.—Respects, missus. Sorry to see ye're enj'yin' poor health."

"Yes, Jonathan, Mrs. Holcroft has been sick, but she's much better and will soon be well. She's very tired now from the long drive, but quiet life and country air will soon make her strong.—I'll just step out and care for the horses, Alida, and soon be back again.—You come and help me, Jonathan, and keep your dog off, too."

The old man complied with rather poor grace, for he would have much preferred to interview the bride at whom he was staring with all his weak, watery eyes. Holcroft understood his neighbor's peculiarities too well to subject his wife to this ordeal, and was bent on despatching Jonathan homeward as soon as possible.

"I say, Jim," said the old guardsman, who felt that he was speaking to the boy he had known for thirty odd years, "where on airth did you pick up sich a sickly lookin' critter?"

"I didn't pick her up," replied the farmer, laughingly, "I married her fair and square just as you did your wife a hundred years ago, more or less. Haven't I as good a right to get married as you had?"

"Oh, I ain't a-disputin' yer right, but it seems so kind o' suddint that it's taken what little breath I've left."

"How do you know it's sudden? Did you go around telling every one how you were getting on when you were a-courting?"

"Well, I swan! yer got me. 'Tain't so long ago that I disremember we did it on the sly."

"Well now, Uncle Jonathan, you've got nothing to say against me, for I didn't marry on the sly, although I've gone on the principle that my business wasn't everybody's business. When I saw your wife about my washing and mending I didn't know I was going to be lucky so soon. You know you can't marry a woman in this country till she's willing. But tell your wife she shan't lose anything, and the next time I go to town I'll leave that settin' of eggs she wanted. Now, Jonathan, honor bright, do you feel able to walk home if I give you fifty cents extra?"

"Why sartinly! s'pose I'd take yer away on sich a 'casion? My wife wouldn't let me in if she knowed it."

"Well, you and your wife are good neighbors, and that's more'n I can say for most people in these parts. Here's the money. Mrs. Holcroft isn't strong or well enough to talk any to-night. You got yourself a good supper, didn't you?"

"Yes, yes; helped myself bount'fully. Good-night, and good luck ter yer. I can't help thinkin' it was kind o' suddint though, and then she's sich a sickly lookin' critter. Hope yer haven't been taken in, but then, as you say, the marryin' business, like other kinds o' business, is a man's own business."

"I hope every one will take your sensible view, Uncle Jonathan. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXI

AT HOME

ALIDA was not so cold, weary and almost faint but that she looked around the old kitchen with the strongest interest. This interest was as unlike Mrs. Mumpson's curiosity as she was unlike the widow. It is true the thought of self was prominent, yet hers were not selfish thoughts. There are some blessed natures in the world that in doing the best for themselves do the best that is possible for others.

The genial warmth of the fire was grateful to her chilled and enfeebled frame; the homely kitchen, with its dresser of chinaware, its tin-closet and pantry, the doors of which old Jonathan had left open, man-like, after helping himself "bountifully," all suggested more comfort to this pallid bride, sitting there alone, than wealth of ornament in elegant apartments have brought to many others. She saw her chief domain, not in its coarse and common aspect, but as her vantage ground, from which she could minister to the comforts of the one who had rescued her. Few brides would care to enter the kitchen first, but she was pleased; she who had scarcely hoped to smile again looked smilingly around on the quaint, homelike room.

"And this is to be my home," she murmured. "How strange, unexpected, yet natural it all is!—just what he led me to expect. The little lonely farmhouse, where I can be safe from staring eyes and unwounded by cruel questionings. Yet that old man had a dozen questions on his tongue. I believe *he* took him away to save my feelings. It's strange that so plain and simple a man in most respects can be so

considerate. Oh, pray God that all goes on as it promises! I couldn't have dreamt it this morning, but I have an odd, homelike feeling already. Well, since I *am* at home I may as well take off my hat and cloak."

As she did so, Holcroft entered and said, heartily, "That's right, Alida. You are here to stay, you know. You mustn't think it amiss that I left you a few moments alone, for I had to get that talkative old man off home. He's getting a little childish and would fire questions at you point blank."

"But shouldn't you have taken him home in the wagon? I don't mind being alone."

"Oh, no, he's spry enough to walk twice the distance and often does. It's light as day outside and I made it right with him. You can leave your things up stairs in your room, and I'll carry up your bundles also, if you are rested enough for the journey."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "I'm feeling better already."

He led the way to the apartment that Mrs. Mumpson had occupied and said, regretfully, "I'm sorry the room looks so bare and comfortless, but that will all be mended in time. When you come down, we'll have some coffee and supper."

She soon re-appeared in the kitchen, and he continued, "Now I'll show you that I'm not such a very helpless sort of man, after all, so if you're sick you needn't worry. I'm going to get you a good cup of coffee and broil you a piece of steak."

"Oh, please let me"—she began.

"No; can't allow you to do anything to-night but sit in that chair. You promised to mind, you know," and he smiled so genially that she smiled back at him, although tears came into her eyes.

"I can't realize it all," she said in a low voice. "To think how this day began and how it is ending?"

"It's ending in a poor man's kitchen, Alida. It was rather rough to bring you in here first, but the parlor is cold and comfortless."

"I would rather be brought here. It seems to me that it must be a light and cheerful room."

"Yes, the sun shines in these east windows, and there's another window facing the south, so it's light all day long."

She watched him curiously, and with not a little self-reproach, as he deftly prepared supper. "It's too bad for me to sit idle while you do such things, yet you do everything so well that I fear I shall seem awkward. Still, I think I do at least know how to cook a little."

"If you knew what I've had to put up with for a year or more, you wouldn't worry about satisfying me in this respect. Except when old Mrs. Wiggins was here, I had few decent meals that I didn't get myself," and then, to cheer her up, he laughingly told her of Mrs. Mumpson's essay at making coffee. He had a certain dry humor, and his unwonted effort at mimicry was so droll in itself that Alida was startled to hear her own voice in laughter, and she looked almost frightened, so deeply had she been impressed that it would never be possible or even right for her to laugh again.

The farmer was secretly much pleased at his success. If she would laugh, be cheerful and not brood, he felt sure she would get well and be more contented. The desperate view she had taken of her misfortunes troubled him, and he had thought it possible that she might sink into despondency and something like invalidism; but that involuntary bubble of laughter re-assured him. "Quiet, wholesome, cheerful life will restore her to health," he thought, as he put his favorite beverage and the sputtering steak on the table. "Now," he said, placing a chair at the table, "you can pour me a cup of coffee."

"I'm glad I can do something," she answered, "for I can't get over the strangeness of being so waited on. Indeed, everything that was unexpected or undreamed of has happened," and there was just the faintest bit of color on her cheeks as she sat down opposite him.

Few men are insensible to simple, natural, womanly

grace, and poor Holcroft, who so long had been compelled to see at his table "perfect terrors," as he called them, was agreeably impressed by the contrast she made with the Mumpson and Malony species. Alida unconsciously had a subtile charm of carriage and action, learned in her long past and happy girlhood, when all her associations were good and refined. Still, in its truest explanation, this grace is native and not acquired; it is a personal trait. Incapable of nice analysis or fine definitions, he only thought, "How much pleasanter it is to see at the table a quiet, sensible woman instead of a 'peculiar female' !" and it was not long before he supplemented her remark by saying, "Perhaps things are turning out for both of us better than we expected. I had made up my mind this morning to live here like a hermit, get my own meals, and all that. I actually had the rough draught of an auction-bill in my pocket—yes, here it is now—and was going to sell my cows, give up my dairy and try to make my living in a way that wouldn't require any woman help. That's what took me up to Tom Watterly's; I wanted him to help me put the bill in shape. He wouldn't look at it, and talked me right out of trying to live like Robinson Crusoe, as he expressed it. I had been quite cheerful over my prospects; indeed, I was almost happy in being alone again after having such terrors in the house. But, as I said, Watterly talked all the courage and hope right out of me, and made it clear that I couldn't go it alone. You see, Tom and I have been friends since we were boys together, and that's the reason he talks so plain to me."

"He has a good, kind heart," said Alida. "I don't think I could have kept up at all had it not been for his kindness."

"Yes, Tom's a rough diamond. He don't make any pretences, and looks upon himself as a rather hard case, but I fancy he's doing kind things in his rough way half the time. Well, as we were talking, he remembered you, and he spoke of you so feelingly and told your story with so much honest sympathy that he awoke my sympathy. Now you know how it has all come about. You see it's all natural enough and

simple enough, and probably it's the best thing that could have happened for us both. All you have to do is to get strong and well, and then it won't be any one-sided affair, as you've been too much inclined to think. I can go on and keep my farm and home just as my heart is bent on doing. I want you to understand everything, for then your mind will be more satisfied and at rest, and that's half the battle in getting over sickness and trouble like yours."

"I can only thank God and you for the great change in my prospects. This quiet and escape from strangers are just what I most craved, and I am already beginning to hope that if I can learn to do all you wish, I shall find a content that I never hoped for," and the tears that stood in her eyes were witnesses of her sincerity.

"Well, don't expect to learn everything at once. Let me have my way for awhile, and then you'll find, as you get strong, and the busy season comes on, that I'll be so taken up with the farm that you'll have your own way. Won't you have some more steak? No? Well, you've enjoyed your supper a little, haven't you?"

"Yes," she replied, smiling, "I actually felt hungry when I sat down, and the coffee has taken away the tired, faint feeling."

"I hope you'll soon be good and hungry three times a day," he said, laughing pleasantly.

"You'll at least let me clear the table?" she asked. "I feel so much better."

"Yes, if you are sure you're strong enough. It may make you feel more at home. But drop everything till to-morrow, when tired. I must go out and do my night work, and it's night work now, sure enough."

"It's too bad!" she said, sympathetically.

"What! to go out and feed my stock this clear, bright night? and after a hearty supper, too? Such farming is fun. I feel, too, as if I wanted to go and pat the cows all around in my gladness that I'm not going to sell them. Now

remember, let everything go till morning as soon as you feel tired."

She nodded smilingly and set to work. Standing in the shadow of a hemlock, he watched her for a few moments. Her movements were slow, as would be natural to one who had been so reduced by illness, but this very evidence of feebleness touched his feelings. "She is eager to begin—too eager. No nonsense there about 'menial tasks.' Well, it does give one hope to see such a woman as that in the old kitchen," and then the hungry cattle welcomed him.

The traveller feels safe after the fierce Arab of the desert has broken bread with him. It would seem that a deep principle of human nature is involved in this act. More than the restoring power of the nourishment itself was the moral effect for Alida of that first meal in her husband's home. It was another step in what he had said was essential—the forming of his acquaintance. She had seen from the first that he was plain and unpolished—that he had not the veneer of gentility of the man she had so mistakenly married, yet in his simple truth he was inspiring a respect which she had never felt for any man before. "What element of real courtesy has been wanting?" she asked herself. "If this is an earnest of the future, thank God for the real. I've found to my cost what a clever imitation of a man means."

It was as sweet as it was strange to think that she, who had trembled at the necessity of becoming almost a slave to unfeeling strangers, had been compelled to rest while a husband performed tasks naturally hers. It was all very homely, yet the significance of the act was chivalrous consideration for her weakness; the place, the nature of the ministry could not degrade the meaning of his action. Then, too, during the meal he had spoken natural, kindly words which gave to their breaking of bread together the true interpretation. Although so feeble and weary, she found a deep satisfaction in beginning her household work. "It does make me

feel more at home," she said. "Strange that he should have thought of it."

She had finished her task and sat down again when he entered with a pail of milk. Taking a dipper with a strainer on one side of it, he poured out a tumblerful. "Now take this," he said. "I've always heard that milk fresh from the cow was very strengthening. Then go and sleep till you are thoroughly rested, and don't think of coming down in the morning till you feel like it. I'll make the fire and get breakfast. You have seen how easily I can do it. I have several more cows to milk and so will say 'good-night.' "

"Good-night, and may God always bless you for your kindness to me to-day."

For the first time since chaos had come into her life, Alida slept soundly and refreshingly, unpursued by the fears which had haunted even her dreams. When she awoke, she expected to see the gray locks and repulsive features of the woman who had occupied the apartment with her at the almshouse, but she was alone in a small, strange room. Then memory gathered up the threads of the past; but so strange, so blessed did the truth seem that she hastened to dress and go down to the old kitchen and assure herself that her mind had not become shattered by her troubles and was mocking her with unreal fancies. The scene she looked upon would have soothed and reassured her even had her mind been as disordered as she, for the moment, had been tempted to believe. There was the same homely room which had pictured itself so deeply on her memory the evening before. Now it was more attractive, for the morning sun was shining into it, lighting up its homely details with a wholesome, cheerful reality which made it difficult to believe that there were tragic experiences in the world. The wood-fire in the stove crackled merrily, and the lid of the kettle was already bobbing up and down from internal commotion.

As she opened the door, a burst of song entered, securing her attention. She had heard the birds before without recognizing consciousness, as is so often true of our own con-

dition in regard to the familiar sounds of nature. It was now almost as if she had received another sense, so strong, sweet and cheering was the symphony. Robins, song-sparrows, blackbirds, seemed to have gathered in the trees near by, to give her a jubilant welcome; but she soon found that the music shaded off to distant, dream-like notes, and remembered that it was a morning chorus of a hemisphere. This universality did not render the melody less personally grateful. We can appropriate all that is lovely in Nature, yet leave all for others. As she stood listening, and inhaling the soft air, full of the delicious perfume of the grass and expanding buds, and looking through the misty sunshine on the half-veiled landscape, she heard Holcroft's voice, chiding some unruly animal in the barnyard.

This recalled her, and with the elasticity of returning health and hope, she set about getting breakfast.

"It seems to me that I never heard birds sing before," she thought, "and their songs this morning are almost like the music of heaven. They seem as happy and unconscious of fear and trouble as if they were angels. Mother and I used to talk about the Garden of Eden, but could the air have been sweeter, or the sunshine more tempered to just the right degree of warmth and brightness than here about my home? Oh, thank God again, again and forever, for a home like this," and for a few moments something of the ecstasy of one delivered from the black thraldom of evil filled her soul. She paused now and then to listen to the birds, for only their songs seemed capable of expressing her emotion. It was but another proof that heavenly thoughts and homely work may go on together.

CHAPTER XXII

GETTING ACQUAINTED

IT was still early, and Holcroft was under the impression that Alida would sleep late after the severe fatigues of the preceding day. He therefore continued his work at the barn sufficiently long to give his wife time for her little surprise. She was not long in finding and laying her hands on the simple materials for breakfast. A ham hung in the pantry, and beneath it was a great basket of eggs, while the flour barrel stood in the corner. Biscuits were soon in the oven, eggs conjured into an omelet, and the ham cut into delicate slices, instead of great coarse steaks. Remembering Mrs. Mumpson's failure with the coffee, she made it a trifle strong and boiled the milk that should temper without cooling it. The biscuits rose like her own spirits, the omelet speedily began to take on color like her own flushed face as she busied herself about the stove.

Everything was nearly ready when she saw Holcroft coming toward the house with two pails of milk. He took them to the large dairy room under the parlor and then came briskly to the kitchen. She stood, screened by the door as he entered, then stopped and stared at the table all set, and at the inviting breakfast on the stove.

Seeing Alida's half-smiling, half-questioning face, seeking his approval, he exclaimed, "Well, you *have* stolen a march on me. I supposed you were asleep yet."

"I felt so much stronger and better when I awoke that I thought you wouldn't mind if I came down and made a beginning."

"You call this a beginning, do you? such a breakfast as this before seven in the morning? I hope you haven't overtaxed yourself."

"No, only a little of just the right kind of tired feeling."

"Haven't you left anything for me to do?"

"Perhaps. You will know when I've put all on the table. What I've prepared is ready."

"Well, this is famous. I'll go and wash and fix up a little and be right down."

When Holcroft returned, he looked at her curiously, for he felt that he, too, was getting acquainted. Her thin face was made more youthful by color; a pleased look was in her blue eyes and a certain neatness and trimness about her dress, to which he had not been accustomed. He scanned the table wonderingly, for things were not put upon it at haphazard; the light biscuits turned their brown cheeks invitingly toward him—she had arranged that they should do that—the ham was crisp, not sodden, and the omelet as russet as a November leaf. "This is a new dish," he said, looking at it closely. "What do you call it?"

"Omelet. Perhaps you won't like it, but mother used to be very fond of it."

"No matter. We'll have it if you like it and it brings you pleasant thoughts of your mother." Then he took a good sip of his coffee and set the cup down again as he had before under the Mumpson *regime,* but with a very different expression. She looked anxiously at him, but was quickly reassured. "I thought *I* knew how to make coffee, but I find I don't. I never tasted anything so good as that. How *do* you make it?"

"Just as mother taught me."

"Well, well, and you call this making a beginning? I just wish I could give Tom Watterly a cup of this coffee. It would set his mind at rest. 'By jocks!' he would say, 'isn't that better than going it alone?'"

She looked positively happy under this sweet incense to a housewifely heart. She was being paid in the coin that

women love best, and it was all the more precious to her because she had never expected to receive it again.

He did like the omelet; he liked everything, and, after helping her liberally, cleared the table, then said he felt equal to doing two men's work. Before going out to his work, he lighted a fire on the parlor hearth and left a good supply of fuel beside it. "Now, Alida," he remarked, humorously, "I've already found out that you have one fault that you and I will have to watch against. You are too willing. I fear you've gone beyond your strength this morning. I don't want you to do a thing to-day except to get the meals, and remember, I can help in this if you don't feel well. There is a fire in the parlor, and I've wheeled the lounge up by it. Take it quietly to-day, and perhaps to-morrow I can begin to show you about butter-making."

"I will do as you wish," she replied, "but please show me a little more where things are before you go out."

This he did and added, "You'll find the beef and some other things on a swing-shelf in the cellar. The potato bins are down there, too. But don't try to get up much dinner. What come quickest and easiest will suit me. I'm a little backward with my work and must plow all day for oats. It's time they were in. After such a breakfast, I feel as if I had eaten a bushel myself."

A few moments later, she saw him going up the lane, that continued on past the house, with his stout team and the plow, and she smiled as she heard him whistling "Coronation" with levity, as some good people would have thought.

Plowing and planting time had come and under happier auspices, apparently, than he had ever imagined possible again. With the lines about his neck, he began with a side-hill plow at the bottom of a large, sloping field which had been in corn the previous year, and the long, straight furrows increased from a narrow strip to a wide, oblong area. "Ah," said he, in tones of strong satisfaction, "the ground crumbles freely; it's just in the right condition. I'll quit plowing

this afternoon in time to harrow and sow all the ground that's ready. Then, so much'll be all done and well done. It's curious how seed, if it goes into the ground at the right time and in the right way, comes right along and never gets discouraged. I ain't much on scientific farming, but I've always observed that when I sow or plant as soon as the ground is ready, I have better luck."

The horses seemed infected by his own brisk spirit, stepping along without urging, and the farmer was swept speedily into the full, strong current of his habitual interests.

One might have supposed the recent events would have the uppermost place in his thoughts, but this was not true. He rather dwelt upon them as the unexpectedly fortunate means to the end now attained. This was his life, and he was happy in the thought that his marriage promised to make this life not merely possible, but prosperous and full of quiet content.

The calling of the born agriculturist, like that of the fisherman, has in it the element of chance and is therefore full of moderate yet lasting excitement. Holcroft knew that, although he did his best, much would depend on the weather and other causes. He had met with disappointments in his crops, and had also achieved what he regarded as fine successes, although they would have seemed meagre on a Western prairie. Every spring kindled anew his hopefulness and anticipation. He watched the weather with the interested and careful scrutiny of a sailor, and it must be admitted that his labor and its results depended more on natural causes than upon his skill and the careful use of fertilizers. He was a farmer of the old school, the traditions received from his father controlled him in the main. Still, his good common sense and long experience stood him fairly well in the place of science and knowledge of improved methods, and he was better equipped than the man who has in his brain all that the books can teach, yet is without experience. Best of all, he had inherited and acquired an abiding love of the soil; he never could have been content

except in its cultivation; he was therefore in the right condition to assimilate fuller knowledge and make the most of it.

He knew well enough when it was about noon. From long habit, he would have known had the sky been overcast, but now his glance at the sun was like looking at a watch. Dusty and begrimed, he followed his team to the barn, slipped from them their headstalls and left them to amuse themselves with a little hay while they cooled sufficiently for heartier food. "Well now," he mused, "I wonder what that little woman has for dinner? another new dish, like enough. Hanged if I'm fit to go in the house, and she looking so trim and neat. I think I'll first take a souse in the brook," and he went up behind the house where an unfailing stream gurgled swiftly down from the hills. At the nearest point, a small basin had been hollowed out, and as he approached he saw two or three speckled trout darting away through the limpid water.

"Aha!" he muttered, "glad you reminded me. When *she's* stronger, she may enjoy catching our supper some afternoon. I must think of all the little things I can to liven her up, so she won't get dull. It's curious how interested I am to know how she's got along and what she has for dinner. And to think that less than a week ago I used to hate to go near the house!"

As he entered the hall on his way to his room, that he might make himself more presentable, an appetizing odor greeted him, and Alida smiled from the kitchen door as she said, "Dinner's ready."

Apparently she had taken him at his word, as she had prepared little else than an Irish stew; yet when he had partaken of it, he thought he would prefer Irish stews from that time onward indefinitely. "Where did you learn to cook, Alida?" he asked.

"Mother wasn't very strong and her appetite often failed her. Then, too, we hadn't much to spend on our table, so we tried to make simple things taste nice. Do you like my way of preparing that old-fashioned dish?"

"I'm going to show you how I like it," he replied, nodding approvingly. "Well, what have you been doing besides tempting me to eat too much?"

"What you said, resting. You told me not to get up much of a dinner, so I very lazily prepared what you see. I've been lying on the lounge most of the morning.'

"Famous; and you feel better?"

"Yes, I think I shall soon get well and strong," she replied, looking at him gratefully.

"Well, well, my luck's turned at last. I once thought it never would, but if this goes on—well, you can't know what a change it is for the better. I can now put my mind on my work."

"You've been plowing all the morning, haven't you?" she ventured, and there was the pleased look in her eyes that he already liked to see.

"Yes," he replied, "and I must keep at it several days to get in all the oats I mean to sow. If this weather holds I shall be through next week."

"I looked in the milk-room a while ago. Isn't there anything I could do there this afternoon?"

"No. I'll attend to everything there. It's too damp for you yet. Keep on resting. Why, bless me! I didn't think you'd be well enough to do anything for a week."

"Indeed," she admitted, "I'm surprised at myself. It seems as if a crushing weight had been lifted off my mind and that I was coming right up. I'm so glad, for I feared I might be feeble and useless a long time."

"Well, Alida, if you had been, or if you ever are, don't think I'll be impatient. The people I can't stand are those who try to take advantage of me, and I tell you I've had to contend with that disposition so long that I feel as if I could do almost anything for one who is simply honest and tries to keep her part of an agreement. But this won't do. I've enjoyed my own dinner so much that I've half forgotten that the horses haven't had theirs yet. Now will you scold if I light my pipe before I go out?"

"Oh, no, I don't mind that."

"No good-natured fibs. Isn't smoke disagreeable?"

She shook her head. "I don't mind it at all," she said, but her sudden paleness puzzled him. He could not know that he had involuntarily recalled the many times that she had filled the evening pipe for a man who now haunted her memory like a spectre.

"I guess you don't like it very much," he said, as he passed out. "Well, no matter. It's getting so mild that I can smoke out-of-doors."

With the exception of the episode of dinner, the day was chiefly passed by Alida in a health-restoring languor, the natural reaction from the distress and strong excitements of the past. The rest that had been enjoined upon her was a blessed privilege, and still more happy was the truth that she could rest. Reclining on the lounge in the parlor, with a wood fire on one side and the April sun on the other, both creating warmth and good cheer, she felt like those who have just escaped from a wreck and ingulfing waves. Her mind was too weary to question either the past or the future, and sometimes a consciousness of safety is happiness in itself. In the afternoon, the crackling of the fire and the calling and singing of the birds without formed a soothing lullaby and she fell asleep.

At last, in a dream, she heard exquisite music which appeared to grow so loud, strong and triumphant that she started up and looked around bewildered. A moment later, she saw that a robin was singing in a lilac bush by the window and that near the bird was a nest partially constructed. She recalled her hopeless grief when she had last seen the building of one of their little homes; and she fell upon her knees with a gratitude too deep for words, and far more grateful to Heaven than words.

Stepping out on the porch, she saw by the shadows that the sun was low in the west and that Holcroft was coming down the lane with his horses. He nodded pleasantly as he passed on to the barn. Her eyes followed him lingeringly

till he disappeared, and then they ranged over the wide valley and the wooded hills in the distance. Not a breath of air was stirring; the lowing of cattle and other rural sounds, softened by distance, came from other farmhouses; the birds were at vespers, and their songs, to her fancy, were imbued with a softer, sweeter melody than in the morning. From the adjacent fields came clear, mellow notes that made her nerves tingle, so ethereal yet penetrating were they. She was sure she had never heard such bird music before. When Holcroft came in to supper she asked, "What birds are those that sing in the field?"

"Meadow larks. Do you like them?"

"I never heard a hymn sung that did me more good."

"Well, I own up, I'd rather hear 'em than much of the singing we used to have down at the meeting-house."

"It seems to me," she remarked, as she sat down at the table, "that I've never heard birds sing as they have to-day."

"Now I think of it, they have been tuning up wonderfully. Perhaps they've an idea of my good luck," he added, smilingly.

"I had thought of that about myself," she ventured. "I took a nap this afternoon, and a robin sang so near the window that he woke me up. It was a pleasant way to be waked."

"Took a nap, did you? That's famous. Well, well, this day's gone just to suit me, and I haven't had many such in a good while, I can tell you. I've got in a big strip of oats, and now, when I come in tired, here's a good supper. I certainly shall have to be on the watch to do Tom Watterly good turns for talking me into this business. That taking a nap was a first-rate idea. You ought to keep it up for a month."

"No, indeed. There's no reason why you should work hard and I be idle. I've rested to-day, as you wished, and I feel better than I ever expected to again; but to-morrow I must begin in earnest. What use is there of your keeping

your cows, if good butter is not made? Then I must be busy with my needle."

"Yes, that's true enough. See how thoughtless I am. I forgot you hadn't any clothes to speak of. I ought to take you to town to a dressmaker."

"I think you had better get your oats in," she replied, smiling shyly. "Besides, I have a dressmaker that just suits me—one that's made my dresses a good many years."

"If she don't suit you, you're hard to be suited," said he, laughing. "Well, some day, after you are fixed up, I shall have to let you know how dilapidated I am."

"Won't you do me a little favor?"

"Oh, yes, a dozen of 'em, big or little."

"Please bring down this evening something that needs mending. I am so much better—"

"No, no, I wasn't hinting for you to do anything to-night."

"But you've promised me," she urged. "Remember, I've been resting nearly all day. I'm used to sewing, and earned my living at it. Somehow, it don't seem natural for me to sit with idle hands."

"If I hadn't promised—"

"But you have."

"I suppose I'm fairly caught," and he brought down a little of the most pressing of the mending.

"Now I'll reward you," she said, handing him his pipe, well filled. "You go in the parlor and have a quiet smoke. I won't be long in clearing up the kitchen."

"What! smoke in the parlor?"

"Yes, why not? I assure I don't mind it."

"Ha! ha! Why didn't I think of it before? I might have kept the parlor and smoked Mrs. Mumpson out."

"It won't be smoke that will keep me out."

"I should hope not, or anything else. I must tell you how I *did* have to smoke Mrs. Mumpson out at last," and he did so with so much drollery that she again yielded to irrepressible laughter.

"Poor thing! I'm sorry for her," she said.

"I'm sorry for Jane—poor little stray cat of a child! I hope we can do something for her some day," and having lighted his pipe, he took up the county paper, left weekly in a hollow tree by the stage-driver, and went into the parlor.

After refreshing up the fire, he sat down to read, but by the time she joined him, the tired man was nodding. He tried to brighten up, but his eyes were heavy.

"You've worked hard to-day," she said, sympathetically.

"Well, I have," he answered, "I've not done such a good day's work in a year."

"Then why don't you go to sleep at once?"

"It don't seem polite—"

"Please don't talk that way," she interrupted. "I don't mind being alone at all. I shall feel a great deal more at home if you forget all about ceremony."

"Well, Alida, I guess we had both better begin on that basis. If I give up when I'm tired, you must. You mustn't think I'm always such a sleepyhead. The fact is I've been more tired out with worry of late than with work. I can laugh about it now, but I've been so desperate over it that I've felt more like swearing. You'll find out I've become a good deal of a heathen."

"Very well, I'll wait till I find out."

"I think we are getting acquainted famously, don't you?"

"Yes," she nodded, with a smile that meant more than a long speech. "Good-night."

CHAPTER XXIII

BETWEEN THE PAST AND FUTURE

HUMAN nature, in common with Mother Nature, has its immutable laws. The people who existed before the flood were, in their primal motives, like those of to-day. The conventionality of highly civilized society does not change the heart, but it puts so much restraint upon it that not a few appear heartless. They march through life and fight its battles like uniformed men, trained in a certain school of tactics. This monotony of character and action is superficial in most cases, rather than real, and he who fathoms the eyes of others, who catches the subtile quality of tones and interprets the flexible mouth that utters them, will discover that the whole gamut of human nature exists in those that appear only like certain musical instruments, made by machinery to play a few well-known tunes. Conventional restraint often, no doubt, produces dwarfed and defective human nature. I suppose that if souls could be put under a microscope, the undeveloped rudiments of almost everything would be discovered. It is more satisfactory to study things themselves than their suggestions; this we are usually better able to do among people of simple and untrammelled modes of life, who are not practiced in disguises. Their peculiar traits and their general and dominant laws and impulses are exhibited with less reserve than by those who have learned to be always on their guard. Of course there are common-place yeomen as truly as common-place aristocrats, and simple life abounds in simpletons.

When a man in Holcroft's position has decided traits,

they are apt to have a somewhat full expression; his rugged nature beside a tamer one outlines itself more vividly, just as a mountain-peak is silhouetted against the horizon better than a rounded hill. It probably has been observed that his character possessed much simplicity and directness. He had neither the force nor the ambition to raise him above his circumstances; he was merely decided within the lines of his environment. Perhaps the current of his life was all the stronger for being narrow. His motives were neither complex nor vacillating. He had married to keep his home and to continue in the conditions of life dear from association and the strongest preference, and his heart overflowed with good will and kindness toward Alida because she promised to solve the hard problem of the future satisfactorily. Apart from the sympathy which her misfortune had evoked, he probably could have felt much the same toward any other good, sensible woman, had she rendered him a similar service. It is true, now that Alida was in his home, that she was manifesting agreeable traits which gave him pleasant little surprises. He had not expected that he would have had half so much to say to her, yet felt it his duty to be sociable in order to cheer her up and mark the line between even a business marriage and the employment of a domestic. Both his interest and his duty required that he should establish the bonds of strong friendly regard on the basis of perfect equality, and he would have made efforts similar to those he put forth in behalf of any woman, if she had consented to marry him with Alida's understanding. Now, however, that his suddenly adopted project of securing a housekeeper and helper had been consummated, he would find that he was not dealing with a business partner in the abstract, but a definite woman, who had already begun to exert over him her natural influence. He had expected more or less constraint, and that some time must elapse before his wife would cease to be in a sense company whom he, with conscious and deliberate effort, must entertain. On the contrary, she entertained and interested him, although she said so little, and by some sub-

tile power she unloosed his tongue and made it easy for him to talk to her. In the most quiet and unobtrusive way, she was not only making herself at home, but him also; she was very subservient to his wishes, but not servilely so; she did not assert, but only revealed her superiority, and after even so brief an acquaintance he was ready to indorse Tom Watterly's view, "She's out of the common run."

While all this was true, the farmer's heart was as untouched as that of a child who simply and instinctively likes a person. He was still quietly and unhesitatingly loyal to his former wife. Apart from his involuntary favor, his shrewd, practical reason was definite enough in its grounds of approval. Reason assured him that she promised to do and to be just what he had married her for, but this might have been true of a capable yet disagreeable woman whom he could not like to save himself.

Both in regard to himself and Alida, Holcroft accepted the actual facts with the gladness and much of the unquestioning simplicity of a child. This rather risky experiment was turning out well, and for a time he daily became more and more absorbed in his farm and its interests. Alida quietly performed her household tasks and proved that she would not need very much instruction to become a good butter-maker. The short spring of the North required that he should be busy early and late to keep pace with the quickly passing seed-time. His hopefulness, his freedom from household worries, prompted him to sow and plant increased areas of land. In brief, he entered on just the business-like honeymoon he had hoped for.

Alida was more than content with the conditions of her life. She saw that Holcroft was not only satisfied, but also pleased with her, and that was all she had expected, and indeed all that thus far she had wished or hoped. She had many sad hours; wounds like hers cannot heal readily in a true, sensitive woman's heart. While she gained in cheerfulness and confidence, the terrible and unexpected disaster which had overtaken her rendered impossible the serenity

of those with whom all has gone well. Dread of something, she knew not what, haunted her painfully, and memory at times seemed malignantly perverse in recalling one whom she prayed to forget.

Next to her faith and Holcroft's kindness, her work was her best solace, and she thanked God for the strength to keep busy.

On the first Sunday morning after their marriage the farmer overslept and breakfast had been ready some time when he came down. He looked with a little dismay at the clock over the kitchen mantel and asked, "Aren't you going to scold a little?"

She shook her head, nor did she look the chiding which often might as well be spoken.

"How long have I kept breakfast waiting, or you rather?"

"What difference does it make? You needed the rest. The breakfast may not be so nice," was her smiling answer.

"No matter. You are nice to let a man off in that way." Observing the book in her lap he continued, "So you were reading the old family Bible to learn lessons of patience and forbearance?"

Again she shook her head. She often oddly reminded him of Jane in her employment of signs instead of speech, but in her case there was a grace, a suggestiveness and even a piquancy about them which made them like a new language. He understood and interpreted her frankly. "I know, Alida," he said, kindly, "you are a good woman. You believe in the Bible and love to read it."

"I was taught to read and love it," she replied, simply. Then her eyes dropped and she faltered, "I've reproached myself bitterly that I rushed away so hastily that I forgot the Bible my mother gave me."

"No, no," he said, heartily, "don't reproach yourself for that. It was the Bible in your heart that made you act as you did."

She shot him a swift, grateful glance through her tears, but made no other response.

Having returned the Bible to the parlor, she put the breakfast on the table and said, quietly, "It looks as if we would have a rainy day."

"Well," said he, laughing, "I'm as bad as the old woman —it seems that women can run farms alone if men can't. Well, this old dame had a big farm and employed several men, and she was always wishing it would rain nights and Sundays. I'm inclined to chuckle over the good this rain will do my oats, instead of being sorry to think how many sinners it'll keep from church. Except in protracted-meeting times, most people of this town would a great deal rather risk their souls than be caught in the rain on Sunday. We don't mind it much week-days, but Sunday rain is very dangerous to health."

"I'm afraid I'm as bad as the rest," she said, smiling. "Mother and I usually stayed home when it rained hard."

"Oh, we don't need a hard storm in the country. People say, 'It looks threatening,' and that settles it; but we often drive to town rainy days to save time."

"Do you usually go to church at the meeting-house I see off in the valley?" she asked.

"I don't go anywhere," and he watched keenly to see how she would take this blunt statement of his practical heathenism.

She only looked at him kindly and accepted the fact.

"Why don't you pitch into me?" he asked.

"That wouldn't do any good."

"You'd like to go, I suppose?"

"No, not under the circumstances, unless you wished to. I'm cowardly enough to dread being stared at."

He gave a deep sigh of relief. "This thing has been troubling me," he said. "I feared you would want to go, and if you did, I should feel that you ought to go."

"I fear I'm very weak about it, but I shrink so from meeting strangers. I do thank God for his goodness many times a day and ask for help. I'm not brave enough to do any more, yet."

His rugged features became very sombre as he said, "I wish I had as much courage as you have."

"You don't understand me," she began, gently.

"No, I suppose not. It's all become a muddle to me. I mean this church and religious business."

She looked at him wistfully, as if she wished to say something, but did not venture to do so. He promptly gave a different turn to the conversation by quoting Mrs. Mumpson's tirade on churchgoing the first Sunday after her arrival. Alida laughed, but not in a wholly mirthful and satisfied way. "There," he concluded, "I'm touching on things a little too sacred for you. I respect your feelings and beliefs, for they are honest and I wish I shared in 'em." Then he suddenly laughed again as he added, "Mrs. Mumpson said there was too much milking done on Sunday, and it's time I was breaking the Fourth Commandment, after her notion."

Alida now laughed outright, without reservation.

"'By jocks!' as Watterly says, what a difference there is in women!" he soliloquized on his way to the barn. "Well, the church question is settled for the present, but if Alida should ask me to go, after her manner this morning, I'd face the whole creation with her."

When at last he came in and threw off his water-proof coat, the kitchen was in order, and his wife was sitting by the parlor fire with Thomson's "Land and the Book" in her hand.

"Are you fond of reading?" he asked.

"Yes, very."

"Well, I am, too, sort of; but I've let the years slip by without doing half as much as I ought."

"Light your pipe and I'll read to you if you wish me to."

"Oh, come, now. I at least believe in Sunday as a day of rest and you need it. Reading aloud is about as hard work as I can do."

"But I'm used to it. I read aloud to mother a great deal," and then there passed over her face an expression of deep pain.

"What is it, Alida? Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, oh, yes," she replied, hastily, and her pale face became crimson.

It was another stab of memory recalling the many Sundays she had read to the man who had deceived her. "Shall I read?" she asked.

"Alida," he said, very kindly, "it wasn't the thought of your mother that brought that look of pain into your face."

She shook her head sadly, with downcast eyes. After a moment or two, she raised them appealingly to him as she said simply, "There is so much that I wish I could forget."

"Poor child! Yes, I think I know. Be patient with yourself, and remember that you were never to blame."

Again came that quick, grateful glance by which some women express more than others can ever put in words. Her thought was, "I didn't think that even he was capable of that. What a way of assuring me that he'll be patient with me!" Then she quietly read for an hour descriptions of the Holy Land that were not too religious for Holcroft's mind and which satisfied her conscience better than much she had read in former days to satisfy a taste more alien to hers than that of her husband.

Holcroft listened to her correct pronunciation and sweet, natural tones with a sort of pleased wonder. At last he said, "You must stop now."

"Are you tired?" she asked.

"No, but you are, or ought to be. Why, Alida, I didn't know you were so well educated. I'm quite a barbarous old fellow compared with you."

"I hadn't thought of that before," she said, with a laugh.

"What a fool I was, then, to put it into your head!"

"You must be more careful. I'd never have such thoughts if you didn't suggest them."

"How did you come to get such a good education?"

"I wish I had a better one. Well, I did have good advantages up to the time I was seventeen. After I was old enough I went to school quite steadily, but it seems to me

that I learned a little of everything and not much of anything. When father died and we lost our property, we had to take to our needles. I suppose I might have obtained work in a store, or some such place, but I couldn't bear to leave mother alone and I disliked being in public. I certainly didn't know enough to teach, and besides, I was afraid to try."

"Well, well, you've stumbled into a quiet enough place at last."

"That's what I like most about it, but I don't think I stumbled into it. I think I've been led and helped. That's what I meant when I said you didn't understand me," she added, hesitatingly. "It don't take courage for me to go to God. I get courage by believing that He cares for me like a father, as the Bible says. How could I ever have found so kind a friend and good a home myself?"

"I've been half inclined to believe there's a Providence in it myself—more and more so as I get acquainted with you. Your troubles have made you better, Alida; mine made me worse. I used to be a Christian; I ain't any more."

She looked at him smilingly as she asked, "How do you know?"

"Oh, I know well enough," he replied, gloomily. "Don't let's talk about it any more," and then he led her on to speak simply and naturally about her childhood home and her father and mother.

"Well," he said, heartily, "I wish your mother was living, for nothing would please me better than to have such a good old lady in the house."

She averted her face as she said, huskily, "I think it was better she died before—" but she did not finish the sentence.

By the time dinner was over, the sun was shining brightly, and he asked her if she would not like to go up the lane to his woodland to see the view. Her pleased look was sufficient answer. "But are you sure you are strong enough?" he persisted.

"Yes, it will do me good to go out, and I may find some wild flowers."

"I guess you can, a million or two."

By the time he was through at the barn she was ready and they started up the lane, now green with late April grass and enlivened with dandelions in which bumble-bees were wallowing. The sun had dried the moisture sufficiently for them to pass on dry-shod, but everything had the fresh, vernal aspect that follows a warm rain. Spring had advanced with a great bound since the day before. The glazed and glutinous cherry buds had expanded with aromatic odors and the white of the blossoms was beginning to show.

"By to-morrow," said Holcroft, "the trees will look as if covered with snow. Let me help you," and he put his hand under her arm, supporting and aiding her steps up the steep places.

Her lips were parted, the pleased look was in her eyes as they rested on trees and shrubs which lined the half ruinous stone walls on either side. "Everything seems so alive and glad this afternoon," she remarked.

"Yes," replied the matter-of-fact farmer. "A rain such as we had this morning is like turning the water on a big mill-wheel. It starts all the machinery right up. Now the sun's out, and that's the greatest motor power of all. Sun and moisture make the farm go."

"Mustn't the ground be enriched, too?"

"Yes, yes indeed; I suppose that's where we all fail. But it's no easy matter to keep a farm in good heart. That's another reason why I'm so glad I won't have to sell my stock. A farm run without stock is sure to grow poor; and if the farm grows poor, the owner does as a matter of course. But what put enriching the ground into your head? Do you know anything about farming?"

"No, but I want to learn. When I was a girl, father had a garden. He used to take papers about it, and I often read them aloud to him evenings. Now I remember there used

to be much in them about enriching the ground. Do you take any such paper?"

"No. I haven't much faith in book-farming."

"I don't know," she ventured. "Seems to me you might get some good ideas out of papers, and your experience would teach you whether they were useful ideas or not. If you'll take one, I'll read it to you."

"I will, then, for the pleasure of hearing you read, if nothing else. That's something I hadn't bargained for," he added, laughing.

She answered in the same spirit by saying, "I'll throw that in and not call it square yet."

"I think I've got the best of you," he chuckled; "and you know nothing makes a Yankee farmer happier than to get the best of a bargain."

"I hope you'll continue to think so. Can I sit down a few moments?"

"Why, certainly. How forgetful I am! Your talk is too interesting for me to think of anything else," and he placed her on a flat rock by the side of the lane, while he leaned against the wall.

Bees and other insects were humming around them; a butterfly fluttered over the fence and alighted on a dandelion almost at her feet; meadow larks were whistling their limpid notes in the adjoining fields, while from the trees about the house beneath them came the songs of many birds, blending with the babble of the brook which ran not far away.

"Oh, how beautiful, how strangely beautiful it all is!"

"Yes, when you come to think of it, it is real pretty," he replied. "It's a pity we get so used to such things that we don't notice 'em much. I should feel miserable enough, though, if I couldn't live in just such a place. I shouldn't wonder if I was a good deal like that robin yonder. I like to be free and enjoy the spring weather, but I suppose neither he nor I think or know how fine it all is."

"Well, both you and the robin seem a part of it," she said, laughing.

"Oh, no, no," he replied with a guffaw which sent the robin off in alarm, "I ain't beautiful and never was."

She joined his laugh, but said with a positive little nod, "I'm right, though. The robin isn't a pretty bird, yet everybody likes him."

"Except in cherry time. Then he has an appetite equal to mine. But everybody don't like me. In fact, *I* think I'm generally disliked in this town."

"If you went among them more they wouldn't dislike you."

"I don't want to go among them."

"They know it, and that's the reason they dislike you."

"Would you like to go out to tea-drinkings, and all that?"

"No indeed; and I don't suppose I'd be received," she added, sadly.

"So much the worse for them, then, blast 'em," said Holcroft, wrathfully.

"Oh no, I don't feel that way and you shouldn't. When they can people ought to be sociable and kind."

"Of course I'd do any of my neighbors, except Lemuel Weeks, a good turn if it came in my way, but the less I have to do with them the better I'm satisfied."

"I'm rested enough to go on now," said Alida, quietly.

They were not long in reaching the edge of the woodland, from which there was an extended prospect. For some little time they looked at the wide landscape in silence. Alida gave to it only partial attention, for her mind was very busy with thoughts suggested by her husband's alienation from his neighbors. It would make it easier for her, but the troubled query would arise, "Is it right or best for him? His marrying me will separate him still more."

Holcroft's face grew sad rather than troubled as he looked at the old meeting-house and not at the landscape. He was sitting near the spot where he spent that long forenoon a few Sundays before, and the train of thought came back again. In his deep abstraction, he almost forgot the woman near him

in memories of the past. His old love and lost faith were inseparable from that little white spire in the distance.

Alida stole a glance at him and thought, "He's thinking of her," and she quietly strolled away to look for wild flowers.

"Yes," muttered Holcroft, at last, "I hope Bessie knows. She'd be the first one to say it was right and best for me, and she'd be glad to know that in securing my own home and comfort I had given a home to the homeless and sorrowful—a quiet, good woman, who worships God as she did."

He rose and joined his wife, who held toward him a handful of trailing arbutus, rue, anemones, bloodroot and dicentras. "I didn't know they were so pretty before," he said with a smile.

His smile reassured her, for it seemed kinder than any she had yet received, and his tone was very gentle. "His dead wife will never be my enemy," she murmured. "He has made it right with her in his own thoughts."

CHAPTER XXIV

GIVEN HER OWN WAY

ON Monday the absorbing work of the farm was renewed, and every day brought to Holcroft long and exhausting hours of labor. While he was often taciturn, he evidently progressed in cheerfulness and hope. Alida confirmed his good impressions. His meals were prompt and inviting; the house was taking on an aspect of neatness and order long absent, and his wardrobe was put in as good condition as its rather meagre character permitted. He had positively refused to permit his wife to do any washing and ironing. "We will see about it next fall," he said. "If then you are perfectly well and strong, perhaps, but not in the warm weather now coming on." Then he added, with a little nod, "I'm finding out how valuable you are, and I'd rather save you than the small sum I have to pay old Mrs. Johnson."

In this and in other ways he showed kindly consideration, but his mind continually reverted to his work and outdoor plans with the preoccupation of one who finds that he can again give his thoughts to something from which they had been most reluctantly withdrawn. Thus Alida was left alone most of the time. When the dusk of evening came, he was too tired to say much and he retired early that he might be fresh for work again when the sun appeared. She had no regrets, for although she kept busy, she was resting and her wounds were healing through the long, quiet days. It was the essential calm after the storm. Caring for the dairy and working the butter into firm, sweet, tempting yellow rolls

were the only tasks that troubled her a little, but Holcroft assured her that she was learning these important duties faster than he had expected her to. She had several hours a day in which to ply her needle and thus was soon enabled to replenish her scanty wardrobe.

One morning at breakfast, she appeared in another gown, and although its material was calico, she had the appearance to Holcroft of being unusually well dressed. He looked pleased, but made no comment. When the cherry blossoms were fully out, an old cracked flower vase—the only one in the house—was filled with them, and they were placed in the centre of the dinner table. He looked at them and her, then smilingly remarked, "I shouldn't wonder if you enjoyed those cherry blows more than anything else we have for dinner."

"I want something else, though. My appetite almost frightens me."

"That's famous. I needn't be ashamed of mine, then."

One evening, before the week was over, he saw her busy with a rake about the door. Last year's leaves were still scattered about, with twigs and even small boughs wrested by the winds from the trees. He was provoked with himself that he had neglected the usual spring clearing away of litter and a little irritated that she should have tried to do the work herself. He left the horses at the barn and came forward directly. "Alida," he said, gravely, "there's no need of your doing such work; I don't like to see you do it."

"Why," she replied, "I've heard that women in the country ofter milk and take care of the chickens."

"Yes, but that's very different from this work. I wouldn't like people to think I expected such things of you."

"It's very easy work," she said, smilingly, "easier than sweeping a room, though something like it. I used to do it at home when I was a girl. I think it does me good to do something in the open air."

She was persisting, but not in a way that chafed him. Indeed, as he looked into her appealing eyes and face flushed

with exercise, he felt that it would be churlish to say another word.

"Well," he said, laughing, "it makes you look so young and rosy I guess it does do you good. I suppose you'll have to have your own way."

"You know I wouldn't do this or anything else if you really didn't want me to."

"You are keen," he replied, with his good-nature entirely restored. "You can see that you get me right under your thumb when you talk that way. But we must both be on our guard against your fault, you know, or pretty soon you'll be taking the whole work of the farm off my hands."

"To be serious," she resumed, accompanying him to the barn for the first time, "I think *you* are working too hard. I'm not. Our meals are so simple that it doesn't take me long to get them. I'm through with the hurry in my sewing, the old dog does the churning and you give me so much help in the dairy that I shall soon have time on my hands. Now, it seems to me that I might soon learn to take entire care of the chickens, big and little, and that would be so much less for you to look after. I'm sure I would enjoy it very much, especially the looking after the little chickens."

"Do you really think you'd like to do that?" he asked, as he turned to her from unharnessing the horses.

"Yes, indeed, if you think I'm competent."

"You are more so than I am. Somehow, little chickens don't thrive under a busy man's care. The mother hens mean well, but they are so confoundedly silly. I declare to you that last year I lost half the little chicks that were hatched out."

"Well, then," she replied, laughing, "I won't be afraid to try, for I think I can beat you in raising chickens. Now, show me how much you feed them at night and how much I'm to give them in the morning, and let me take the whole care of them for a month, get the eggs, and all. If they don't do so well, then I'll resign. I can't break you in a month."

"It looks more as if you'd make me. You have a good

big bump of order, and I haven't any at all in little things. Tom Watterly was right. If I had tried to live here alone, things would have got into an awful mess. I feel ashamed of myself that I didn't clear up the yard before, but my whole mind's been on the main crops."

"As it should be. Don't you worry about the little things. They belong to me. Now show me about the chickens, or they'll go to roost while we're talking."

"But I, as well as the chickens, shall want some supper."

"I won't let either of you starve. You'll see."

"Well, you see this little measure? You fill it from this bin with this mixture of corn and wheat screenings. That's the allowance, morning and evening. Then you go out to the barnyard there and call 'kip, kip, kip.' That's the way my wife used—" He stopped in a little embarrassment.

"I'd be glad if I could do everything as she did," said Alida, gently. "It has grown clearer every day how hard her loss was to you. If you'll tell me what she did and how she did things—" and she hesitated.

"That's good of you, Alida," he replied, gratefully. Then with his directness of speech he added, "I believe some women are inclined to be jealous even of the dead."

"You need never fear to speak of your wife to me. I respect and honor your feelings—the way you remember her. There's no reason why it should be otherwise. I did not agree to one thing and expect another," and she looked him straight in the eyes.

He dropped them, as he stood leaning against the bin in the shadowy old barn, and said, "I didn't think you or any one would be so sensible. Of course one can't forget quickly—"

"You oughtn't to forget," was the firm reply. "Why should you? I should be sorry to think you could forget."

"I fear I'm not like to make you sorry," he replied, sighing. "To tell you the truth," he added, looking at her almost commiseratingly, and then he hesitated.

"Well, the truth is usually best," she said, quietly.

"Well, I'll tell you my thought. We married in haste, we were almost strangers, and your mind was so distracted at the time that I couldn't blame you if you forgot what—what I said. I feared—well, you are carrying out our agreement so sensibly that I want to thank you. It's a relief to find that you're not opposed, even in your heart, that I should remember one that I knew as a little child and married when I was young."

"I remember all you said and what I said," she replied, with the same direct, honest gaze. "Don't let such thoughts trouble you any more. You've been kinder and more considerate than I ever expected. You have only to tell me how she did—"

"No, Alida," he said, quietly, obeying a subtle impulse. "I'd rather you would do everything your own way—as it's natural for you. There, we've talked so long that it's too late to feed the chickens to-night. You can begin in the morning."

"Oh!" she cried, "and you have all your other work to do. I've hindered rather than helped you by coming out."

"No," he replied, decidedly, "you've helped me. I'll be in before very long."

She returned to the house and busied herself in preparations for supper. She was very thoughtful, and at last concluded, "Yes, he is right. I understand. Although I may do *what* his wife did, he don't wish me to do it *as* she did. There could only be a partial and painful resemblance to his eyes. Both he and I would suffer in comparisons and he be continually reminded of his loss. She was his wife in reality, and all relating to her is something sacred and past to him. The less I am like her, the better. He married me for the sake of his farm, and I can best satisfy him by carrying out his purpose in my own way. He's through with sentiment and has taken the kindest way he could to tell me that I've nothing to do with his past. He feared, yes, he *feared* I should forget our businesslike agreement! I didn't know I had given him cause to fear, I certainly

won't hereafter!" and the wife felt, with a trace of bitterness and shame, that she had been put on her guard, that her husband had wished to remind her that she must not forget his motive in marrying her or expect anything not in consonance with that motive. Perhaps she had been too wifelike in her manner and therefore he had feared. She was as sensitive to such a reproach as she would have been in her girlhood.

For once, her intuition was at fault and she misjudged Holcroft in some respects. He did think he was through with sentiment; he could not have talked deliberately to Alida or to any other about his old life and love, and he truly felt that she had no part in that life. It had become a sad and sacred memory, yet he wished to feel that he had the right to dwell upon it as he chose. In his downright sincerity, he wished her to know that he could not help dwelling on it; that for him some things were over and that he was not to blame. He was profoundly grateful to her that she had so clearly accepted the facts of his past, and of their own present relations. He *had* feared, it is true, but she had not realized his fears, and he felt that it was her due that he should acknowledge her straightforward carrying out of the compact made under circumstances which might well excuse her from realizing everything fully.

Moreover, direct and matter-of-fact as he was, he had felt vaguely the inevitable difficulties of their relationship. The very word "wife" might suggest to her mind an affection which he believed it was not in his power to bestow. They had agreed to give an arbitrary and unusual meaning to their marriage, and, while thinking it could have no other meaning for him, his mind was haunted, and he feared that hers might be, by the natural significance of the rite. So far from meaning to hint that she had been too wifelike, he had meant to acknowledge her simple and natural fulfilment of his wishes in a position far more difficult to fill than even he imagined. That she succeeded so well was due to the fact that she entertained for him all the kind feelings possible ex-

cept the one supreme regard which under ordinary circumstances would have accounted for the marriage. The reason that all promised to go so well in their relationship of mere mutual help was the truth that this basis of union had satisfied their mutual need. As the farmer had hoped, they had became excellent friends, supplementing each other's work in a way that promised prosperity.

Without the least intention on the part of either, chance words had been spoken which would not be without effect. He had told her to do everything in her own way, because the moment he thought of it he knew he liked her ways. They possessed a novelty and natural grace which interested him. There is both a natural and a conventional grace, and the true lady learns to blend the one with the other so as to make a charming manner essentially her own—a manner which makes a woman a lady the world over. Alida had little more than natural grace and refinement unmodified by society. This the plain farmer could understand and he was already awakening to an appreciation of it. It impressed him agreeably that Alida should be trim and neat while about her work, and all her actions were entirelly free from the coarse, slovenly manner, the limp carriage and slatternly aspect of the whole tribe which had come and gone during the past year. They had all been so much alike in possessing disagreeable traits that he felt that Alida was the only peculiar one among them. He never thought of instituting comparisons between her and his former wife, yet he did so unconsciously. Mrs. Holcroft had been too much like himself, matter-of-fact, materialistic, kind and good. Devoid of imagination, uneducated in mind, her thoughts had not ranged far from what she touched and saw. She touched them with something of their own heaviness, she saw them as objects—just what they were—and was incapable of obtaining from them much suggestion or enjoyment. She knew when the cherry and plum trees were in blossom just as she knew it was April. The beautiful sounds and changes in nature reminded her that it was time to do certain kinds

of work, and with her, work was alpha and omega. As her mother had before her, she was inclined to be a house-drudge rather than a housewife. Thrift, neatness, order, marked the limits of her endeavor, and she accomplished her tasks with the awkward, brisk directness learned in her mother's kitchen. Only mind, imagination and refinement can embroider the homely details of life. Alida would learn to do all that she had done, but the woman with the finer nature would do it in a different way. Holcroft already knew he liked this way, although he could not define it to himself. Tired as he was when he came home in the evening, his eyes would often kindle with pleasure at some action or remark that interested him from its novelty. In spite of his weariness and pre-occupation, in spite of a still greater obstacle—the inertia of a mind dulled by material life—he had begun to consider Alida's personality for its own sake. He liked to watch her, not to see what she did to his advantage, but how she did it. She was awakening an agreeable expectancy, and he sometimes smilingly said to himself, "What next?"

"Oh, no," he thought, as he was milking the last cow, "I'd much rather she'd take her own natural way in doing things. It would be easier for her and it's her right and—and somehow I like her way just as I used to like Bessie's ways. She isn't Bessie and never can be, and for some reason I'd like her to be as different as possible."

Unconsciously and unintentionally, however, he had given Alida's sensitive nature a slight wound. She felt that she had been told in effect, "You can help me all you please, and I would rather you would do this in a way that will not awaken associations, but you must not think of me or expect me to think of you in any light that was not agreed upon." That he had feared the possibility of this, that he might have fancied he saw indications of this, hurt her pride—that pride and delicacy of feeling which most women shield so instinctively. She was now consciously on her guard, and so was not so secure against the thoughts she deprecated as before. In spite of herself a restraint would tinge

her manner which he would eventually feel in a vague, uncomfortable way.

But he came in at last, very tired and thoroughly good-natured. "I'm going to town to-morrow," he said, "and I thought of taking a very early start so as to save time. Would you like to go?"

"There's no need of my going."

"I thought perhaps you'd enjoy the drive."

"I would have to meet strangers and I'm so entirely content in being alone—I won't go this time unless you wish it."

"Well, if you don't care about it I'll carry out my first plan and take a very early start. I want to sell the butter and eggs on hand, repay Tom Watterly and get some seeds. We need some things from the store, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, you are such a coffee drinker"—she began, smiling.

"Oh, I know," he interrupted. "Make out your list. You shall say what we want. Isn't there something you want for yourself?"

"No, not for myself, but I do want something that perhaps you would enjoy, too. You may think it a waste of money, though."

"Well, you've a right to waste some in your way as well as I have over my pipe."

"That's good. I hadn't thought of that. You are the one that puts notions into my head. I would like three or four geraniums and a few flower seeds."

He looked as if he was thinking deeply and she felt a little hurt that he should not comply at once with her request, knowing that the outlay suggested was very slight.

At last, he looked up, smiling as he said, "So I put notions into your head, do I?"

"Oh, well," she replied, flushing in the consciousness of her thoughts, "if you think it's foolish to spend money for such things—"

"Tush! tush! Alida. Of course I'll get what you wish. But I really am going to put a notion into your head, and

it's stupid and scarcely fair in me that I hadn't thought of some such plan before. You want to take care of the chickens. Well, I put them wholly in your care and you shall have all you can make off them—eggs, young chickens and everything."

"That *is* a new notion," she replied, laughing. "I hadn't thought of such a thing and it's more than fair. What would I do with so much money?"

"What you please. Buy yourself silk dresses if you want to."

"But I couldn't use a quarter of the money."

"No matter, use what you like and I'll put the rest in the bank for you and in your name. I was a nice kind of a business partner, wasn't I?—expecting you to do nearly half the work and then have you say, 'Will you please get me a few plants and seeds?' and then, 'Oh, if you think it's foolish to spend money for such things.' Why, you have as good a right to spend some of the money you help earn as I have. You've shown you'll be sensible in spending it. I don't believe you'll use enough of it. Anyway, it will be yours, as it ought to be."

"Very well," she replied, nodding at him with piquant significance, "I'll always have some to lend you."

"Yes, shouldn't wonder if you were the richest some day. Everything you touch seems to turn out well. I shall be wholly dependent on you hereafter for eggs and an occasional fricassee."

"You shall have your share. Yes, I like this notion. It grows on me. I'd like to earn some money to do what I please with. You'll be surprised to see what strange and extravagant tastes I'll develop!"

"I expect to be perfectly dumfoundered, as Mrs. Mumpson used to say. Since you are so willing to lend, I'll lend you enough to get all you want to-morrow. Make out your list. You can get a good start to-morrow, for I was too tired and it was too late for me to gather the eggs to-night. I know, too, that a good many of the hens have stolen their

nests of late, and I've been too busy to look for 'em. You may find perfect mines of eggs, but, for mercy's sake! don't climb around in dangerous places. I had such bad luck with chicks last year that I've only set a few hens. You can set few or many now, just as you please."

Even as he talked and leisurely finished his supper, his eyes grew heavy with sleep. "What time will you start to-morrow?" she asked.

"Oh, no matter; long before you are up or ought to be. I'll get myself a cup of coffee. I expect to do my morning work and be back by nine or ten o'clock, for I wish to get in some potatoes and other vegetables before Sunday."

"Very well, I'll make out my list and lay it on the table here. Now, why don't you go and sleep at once? You ought, with such an early start in prospect."

"Ought I? Well, I never felt more inclined to do my duty. You must own up I have put one good notion into your head?"

"I have said nothing against any of them. Come, you ought to go at once."

"Can't I smoke my pipe first, please?"

"You'll find it quieter in the parlor."

"But it's pleasanter here where I can watch you."

"Do you think I need watching?"

"Yes, a little, since you don't look after your own interests very sharply."

"It isn't my way to look after anything very sharply."

"No, Alida, thank the Lord! There's nothing sharp about you, not even your tongue. You won't mind being left alone a few hours to-morrow?"

"No, indeed, I like to be alone."

"I thought I did. Most every one has seemed a crowd to me. I'm glad you've never given me that feeling. Well, good-by till you see me driving up with the geraniums."

CHAPTER XXV

A CHARIVARI

THE eastern horizon was aglow with rosy tints the following morning when Holcroft awoke; the stars were but just fading from the sky and the birds were still silent. He knew by these signs that it was very early and that he could carry out his plan of a timely start to town. Dressing very quietly, he stole downstairs, shoes in hand, lest his tread should awaken Alida. The kitchen door leading into the hall was closed. Lifting the latch carefully, he found the lamp burning, the breakfast table set and the kettle humming over a good fire. "This is her work, but where is she?" he queried in much surprise.

The outer door was ajar; he noiselessly crossed the room, and looikng out, he saw her. She had been to the well for a pail of water, but had set it down and was watching the swiftly brightening east. She was so still and her face so white in the faint radiance that he had an odd, uncanny impression. No woman that he had ever known would stop that way to look at the dawn. He could see nothing so peculiar in it as to attract such fixed attention. "Alida," he asked, "what do you see?"

She started slightly and turned to take up the pail; but he had already sprung down the steps and relieved her of the burden.

"Could anything be more lovely than those changing tints? It seems to me I could have stood there an hour," she said, quietly.

"You are not walking or doing all this in your sleep, are

you?" he asked, laughing, yet regarding her curiously. "You looked as you stood there like what people call a—what's that big word?"

"I'm not a somnambulist and never was, to my knowledge. You'll find I'm wide enough awake to have a good breakfast soon."

"But I didn't expect you to get up so early. I didn't wish it."

"It's too late now," she said, pleasantly, "so I hope you won't find fault with me for doing what I wanted to do."

"Did you mean to be up and have breakfast when I told you last night?"

"Yes. Of course I didn't let you know, for you would have said I mustn't, and then I couldn't. It isn't good for people to get up so early and do as much as you had on your mind without eating. Now you won't be any the worse for it."

"I certainly ought to be the better for so much kindly consideration; but it will cure me of such unearthly hours if you feel that you must conform to them. You look pale this morning, Alida; you're not strong enough to do such things, and there's no need of it when I'm so used to waiting on myself."

"I shall have to remind you," she replied, with a bright look at him over her shoulder, "that you said I could do things my own way."

"Well, it seems odd after a year when every one who came here appeared to grudge doing a thing for a man's comfort."

"I should hope I was different from them."

"Well, you are. I thought you were different from any one I ever knew as I saw you there looking at the east. You seem wonderfully fond of pretty things."

"I'll own to that. But if you don't hurry you won't do as much as you hoped by getting up early."

The morning was very mild and she left the outer door open as she went quickly to and fro with elasticity of spirit

as well as step. It was pleasant to have her efforts appreciated and almost as grateful to hear the swelling harmony of song from the awakening birds. The slight cloud that had fallen on her thoughts the evening before had lifted. She felt that she understood Holcroft better, and saw that his feeling was only that of honest friendliness and satisfaction. She had merely to recognize and respond to so much only and all would be well. Meantime, she desired nothing more, and he should be thoroughly convinced of this fact. She grew positively light-hearted over the fuller assurance of the truth that although a wife, she was not expected to love—only to be faithful to all his interests. This, and this only, she believed to be within her power.

Holcroft departed in the serenity characteristic of one's mood when the present is so agreeable that neither memories of the past nor misgivings as to the future are obtrusive. He met Watterly in town, and remarked, "This is another piece of good luck. I hadn't time to go out to your place, although I meant to take time."

"A piece of good luck indeed!" Tom mentally echoed, for he would have been greatly embarrassed if Holcroft had called. Mrs. Watterly felt that she had been scandalized by the marriage which had taken place in her absence, and was all the more resentful for the reason that she had spoken to a cousin of uncertain age and still more uncertain temper in behalf of the farmer. In Mrs. Watterly's estimate of action, it was either right, that is, in accordance with her views, or else it was intolerably wrong and without excuse. Poor Tom had been made to feel that he had not only committed an almost unpardonable sin against his wife and her cousin, but also against all the proprieties of life. "The idea of such a wedding taking place in my rooms and with my husband's sanction!" she had said with concentrated bitterness. Then had followed what he was accustomed to characterize as a spell of "zero weather." He discreetly said nothing. "It didn't seem such a bad idea to me," he thought, "but then I suppose women folks know best about such things."

He was too frank in his nature to conceal from Holcroft his misgivings or his wife's scornful and indignant disapproval. "Sorry Angy feels so bad about it, Jim," he said, ruefully, "but she says I mustn't buy anything more of you."

"Or have anything more to do with me, I suppose?"

"Oh, come now. You know a man's got to let his women folks have their say about household matters, but that don't make any difference in my feelings toward you."

"Well, well, Tom, if it did, I should be slow to quarrel with a man who had done me as good a turn as you have. Thank the Lord; I've got a wife that'll let me have some say about household and all other matters. You, too, are inclined to think that I'm in an awful scrape. I feel less like getting out of it every day. My wife is as respectable as I am and a good sight better than I am. If I'm no longer respectable for having married her, I certainly am better contented than I ever expected to be again. I want it understood, though, that the man who says anything against my wife may have to get me arrested for assault and battery."

"When it comes to that, Jim," replied Watterly, who was meek only in the presence of his wife, "I'd just as lief speak against her as wink if there was anything to say. But I say now, as I said to you at first, she ain't one of the common sort. I thought well of her at first and I think better of her now since she's doing so well by you. But I suppose marrying a woman situated as she was isn't according to regulation. We men are apt to act like the boys we used to be and go for what we want without thinking of the consequences."

"It's the consequences that please me most. If you had been dependent on Mumpsons, Malonys and Wigginses for your home comfort you wouldn't worry about the talk of people who'd never raise a finger for you. Well, good-by, I'm in a hurry. Your heart's in the right place, Tom, and some day you'll come out and take dinner with me. One dinner, such as she'll give you, will bring you round. One

of our steady dishes is a bunch of flowers and I enjoy 'em, too. What do you think of that for a hard-headed old fellow like me?"

Some men are chilled by public disapproval and waver under it, but Holcroft was thereby only the more strongly confirmed in his course. Alida had won his esteem as well as his goodwill, and it was the instinct of his manhood to protect and champion her. He bought twice as many flowers and seeds as she had asked for, and also selected two simple flower vases, then started on his return with the feeling that he had a home.

Alida entered upon her duties to the poultry with almost the pleasure of a child. She first fed them, then explored every accessible nook and hiding place in the barn and outbuildings. It was evident that many of the biddies had stolen their nests and some were brooding upon them with no disposition to be disturbed. Out of the hundred or more fowls on the place, a good many were clucking their maternal instincts, and their new keeper resolved to put eggs under all except the flighty ones that left their nests within two or three days' trial. As the result of her search, the empty egg-basket was in a fair way to be full again very soon. She gloated over her spoils as she smilingly assured herself, "I shall take him at his word. I shall spend nearly all I make this year in fixing up the old house within and without, so he'll scarcely know it."

It was eleven o'clock before Holcroft drove to the door with the flowers, and he was amply repaid by her pleasure in receiving them. "Why, I only expected geraniums," she said, "and you've bought half a dozen other kinds."

"And I expected to get my own coffee this morning and a good breakfast was given me instead, so we are quits."

"You're probably ready for your dinner now, if it is an hour earlier than usual. It will be ready in ten minutes."

"Famous! That will give me a good long afternoon. I say, Alida, when do you want the flower-beds made?"

"No hurry about them. I shall keep the plants in the

window for a week or two. It isn't safe to put them outdoors before the last of May. I'll have some slips ready by that time."

"Yes, I know. You'll soon have enough to set out an acre."

The days of another week passed quietly and rapidly away, Alida becoming almost as much absorbed in her interests as he in his. Every hour added to the beauty of the season without. The unplowed fields were taking on a vivid green and Holcroft said that on the following Monday the cows should go out to pasture. Wholesome, agreeable occupation enabled Alida to put away sad thoughts and memories. Nature and pleasant work are two potent healers, and she was rallying fast under their ministry. Holcroft would have been blind indeed had he not observed changes for the better. Her thin cheeks were becoming fuller, and her exertions, with the increasing warmth of the season, often flushed her face with a charming color. The old sad and troubled expression was passing away from her blue eyes. Every day it seemed easier for her to laugh, and her step grew more elastic. It was all so gradual that he never questioned it, but his eyes followed her with increasing pleasure and he listened when she spoke, with deepening interest. Sundays had been long and rather dreary days, but now he positively welcomed their coming and looked forward to the hours when, instead of brooding over the past, he should listen to her pleasant voice reading his few and neglected books. There was a new atmosphere in his home—a new influence, under which his mind was awakening in spite of his weariness and absorption in the interests of the farm. Alida was always ready to talk about these, and her questions would soon enable her to talk understandingly. She displayed ignorance enough, and this amused him, but her queries evinced no stupidity. In reading to her father and in the cultivation of flowers, she had obtained hints of vital horticultural principles, and Holcroft said to her laughingly

one evening at supper, "You'll soon learn all I know and begin to teach me."

Her manner of deprecating such remarks was to exaggerate them and she replied, "Yes, next week you will sell my eggs and I shall subscribe for the agricultural paper my father used to take. Then will begin all the improvements of book-farming. I shall advise you to sow oats in June, plant corn in March and show you generally that all your experience counts for nothing."

This kind of badinage was new to the farmer and it amused him immensely. He did not grow sleepy so early in the evening, and as he was driving his work prosperously he shortened his hours of labor slightly. She also found time to read the county paper and gossip a little about the news, thus making a beginning in putting him and herself *en rapport* with other interests than those which centred in the farm. In brief, she had an active, intelligent mind and a companionable nature. Her boundless gratitude for her home, which daily grew more homelike, led her to employ all her tact in adding to his enjoyment. Yet so fine was her tact that her manner was a simple embodiment of goodwill, and he was made to feel that it was nothing more.

While all was passing so genially and satisfactorily to Holcroft, it may well be supposed that his conduct was not at all to the mind of his neighbors. News, especially during the busy spring season, permeates a country neighborhood slowly. The fact of his marriage had soon become known, and eventually, through Justice Harkins, the circumstances relating to it and something of Alida's previous history, in a garbled form, came to be discussed at rural firesides. The majority of the men laughed and shrugged their shoulders, implying it was none of their business, but not a few, among whom was Lemuel Weeks, held up their hands and spoke of the event in terms of the severest reprehension. Many of the farmers' wives and their maiden sisters were quite as much scandalized as Mrs. Watterly had been, that an unknown woman, of whom strange stories were told, should

have been brought into the community from the poorhouse, "and after such a heathenish marriage, too," they said. It was irregular, unprecedented and therefore utterly wrong and subversive of the morals of the town. They longed to ostracise poor Alida, yet saw no chance of doing so. They could only talk, and talk they did, in a way that would have made her ears tingle had she heard.

The young men and older boys, however, believed that they could do more than talk. Timothy Weeks had said to a group of his familiars, "Let's give old Holcroft and his poorhouse bride a skimelton that will let 'em know what folks think of 'em."

The scheme found favor at once, and Tim Weeks was soon recognized as organizer and leader of the peculiar style of serenade contemplated. After his day's work was over, he rode here and there summoning congenial spirits. The project soon became pretty well known in several families, but the elder members remained discreetly blind and deaf, proposing to wink at what was going on, yet take no compromising part themselves. Lemuel Weeks winked very knowingly and suggestively. He kept within such bounds, however, as would enable him to swear that he knew nothing and had said nothing, but his son had never felt more assured of his father's sympathy. When at last the motley gathering rendezvoused at Tim's house, Weeks senior was conveniently making a call on a near neighbor.

It was Saturday evening and the young May moon would furnish sufficient light without revealing identity too clearly. About a score of young fellows and hired farm hands of the ruder sort came riding and trudging to Weeks's barn where there was a barrel of cider on tap. Here they blackened their faces with charcoal and stimulated their courage, for it was well known that Holcroft was anything but lamb-like when angered.

"He'll be like a bull in a china shop," remarked Tim, "but then there's enough of us to handle him if he gets too obstrep'rous."

Armed with tin pans and horns which were to furnish the accompaniment to their discordant voices, they started about eight in the evening. As they moved up the road, there was a good deal of coarse jesting and bravado, but when they approached the farmhouse silence was enjoined. After passing up the lane they looked rather nervously at the quiet dwelling softly outlined in the moonlight. A lamp illumined the kitchen window, and Tim Weeks whispered excitedly, "He's there. Let's first peek in the window and then give 'em a scorcher."

Knowing that they should have the coming day in which to rest, Holcroft and Alida had busied themselves with outdoor matters until late. She had been planning her flowerbeds, cutting out the dead wood from some neglected rose bushes and shrubbery, and had also helped her husband by sowing seed in the kitchen garden back of the house. Then, weary, yet pleased with the labor accomplished, they made a very leisurely supper, talking over garden matters and farm prospects in general. Alida had all her flower seeds on the table beside her and she gloated over them and expatiated on the kind of blossoms they would produce with so much zest that Holcroft laughingly remarked, "I never thought that flowers would be one of the most important crops on the place."

"You will think so some day. I can see from the expression of your eyes that the cherry blossoms and now the apple blows which I put on the table please you almost as much as the fruit would."

"Well, it's because I notice 'em. I never seemed to notice 'em much before."

"Oh, no, it's more than that," she replied, shaking her head. "Some people would notice them, yet never see how pretty they were."

"Then they'd be blind as moles."

"The worst kind of blindness is that of the mind."

"Well, I think many country people are as stupid and blind as oxen, and I was one of 'em. I've seen more cherry

and apple blossoms this year than in all my life before, and I haven't thought only of cherries and apples either."

"The habit of seeing what is pretty grows on one," she resumed. "It seems to me that flowers and such things feed mind and heart. So if one *has* mind and heart, flowers become one of the most useful crops. Isn't that practical common sense?"

"Not very common in Oakville. I'm glad you think I'm in a hopeful frame of mind, as they used to say down at the meeting-house. Anyhow, since you wish it, we will have a flower crop as well as a potato crop."

Thus they continued chatting while Alida cleared up the table, and Holcroft, having lighted his pipe, busied himself with peeling a long, slim hickory sapling intended for a whip-stock.

Having finished her tasks, Alida was finally drying her hands on a towel that hung near a window. Suddenly she caught sight of a dark face peering in. Her startled cry brought Holcroft hastily to his feet. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"I saw—" Then she hesitated from a fear that he would rush into some unknown danger.

The rough crew without perceived that their presence was known, and Tim Weeks cried, "Now, all together."

A frightful overture began at once, the hooting and yelling almost drowning the instrumental part and sending to Alida's heart that awful chill of fear produced by human voices in any mob-like assemblage. Holcroft understood the affair at once, for he was familiar with the custom, but she did not. He threw open the door with the purpose of sternly expostulating with the disturbers of the peace and of threatening them with the law unless they retired. With an instinct to share his danger she stepped to his side, and this brought a yell of derision. Lurid thoughts swept through her mind. She had brought this danger. Her story had become known. What might they do to Holcroft? Under the impulse of vague terror and complete self-sacri-

fice, she stepped forward and cried, "I only am to blame. I will go away forever if you will spare—" But again the scornful clamor rose and drowned her voice.

Her action and words had been so swift that Holcroft could not interfere, but in an instant he was at her side, his arm around her, his square jaw set, and his eyes blazing with his kindling anger. He was not one of those men who fume early under provocation and in words chiefly. His manner and gesture were so impressive that his tormentors paused to listen.

"I know," he said, quietly, "all about this old, rude custom—that it's often little more than a rough lark. Well, now that you've had it, leave at once. I'm in no mood for such attention from my neighbors. This is my wife, and I'll break any man's head who says a word to hurt her feelings—"

"Oh, yes, take care of her feelings, now it's your turn. They must 'o been hurt before," piped up Tim Weeks.

"Good for you, old man, for showin' us your poorhouse bride," said another.

"We don't fancy such grass widders, and much married, half-married women in Oakville," yelled a third.

"Why didn't yer jump over a broomstick for a weddin' ceremony?" some one else bawled.

These insults were fired almost in a volley. Alida felt Holcroft's arm grow rigid for a second. "Go in' quick," he said. Then she saw him seize the hickory sapling he had leaned against the house, and burst upon the group like a thunderbolt. Cries of pain, yells and oaths of rage rose above the rain of blows. The older members of the crew sought to close upon him, but he sprang back, and the tough sapling swept about him like a circle of light. It was a terrific weapon in the hands of a strong man, now possessed of almost giant strength in his rage. More than one fellow went down under its stinging cut, and heads and faces were bleeding. The younger portion of the crowd speedily took to their heels, and soon even the most stubborn fled, the

farmer vigorously assisting their ignominious retreat with tremendous downward blows on any within reach. Tim Weeks had managed to keep out of the way till they entered the lane; then, taking a small stone from the fence, he hurled it at their pursuer and attempted to jump over the wall. This was old, and gave way under him in such a way that he fell on the other side. Holcroft leaped the fence with a bound, but Tim, lying on his back, shrieked and held up his hands. "You won't hit a feller when he's down."

"No," said Holcroft, arresting his hickory. "I'll send you to jail, Tim Weeks. That stone you fired cut my head. Was your father in that crowd?"

"N-o-o," blubbered Tim.

"If he was, I'd follow him home, and whip him in his own house. Now, clear out, and tell the rest of your rowdy crew that I'll shoot the first one of you that disturbs me again. I'll send the constable for you, and maybe for some of the others."

Dire was the dismay, and dreadful the groaning in Oakville that night. Never before had salves and poultices been in such demand. Not a few would be disfigured for weeks, and wherever Holcroft's blows had fallen welts rose like whipcords. In Lemuel Weeks's dwelling the consternation reached its climax. Tim, bruised from his fall, limped in and told his portentous story. In his spite, he added, "I don't care, I hit him hard. His face was all bloody."

"All bloody!" groaned his father. "Lord a' mercy! He can send you to jail, sure enough!"

Then Mrs. Weeks sat down and wailed aloud.

CHAPTER XXVI

"YOU DON'T KNOW"

AS Timothy Weeks limped hastily away, Holcroft, with a strong revulsion of feeling, thought of Alida. *He* had been able to answer insults in a way eminently satisfactory to himself, and every blow had relieved his electrical condition. But how about the poor woman who had received worse blows than he had inflicted? As he hastened toward the house he recalled a dim impression of seeing her sink down on the doorstep. Then he remembered her effort to face the marauders alone. "She said she was to blame, poor child! as if there were any blame at all! She said, 'spare him,' as if I was facing a band of murderers instead of a lot of neighborhood scamps, and that she'd go away. I'd fight all Oakville, men, women and children, before I'd permit that," and he started on a run.

He found Alida on the step where she had sunk as if struck down by the rough epithets hurled at her. She was sobbing violently, almost hysterically, and at first could not reply to his soothing words. He lifted her up, and half carried her within to a chair. "Oh, oh," she cried, "why did I not realize it more fully before? Selfish woman that I was, to marry you and bring on you all this shame and danger. I should have thought of it all, I ought to have died rather than do you such a wrong."

"Alida, Alida," protested Holcroft, "if it were all to do over again, I'd be a thousand times more—"

"Oh, I know, I know. You are brave and generous and honest. I saw that much when you first spoke to me. I yielded to the temptation to secure such a friend; I was too

cowardly to face the world alone. And now see what's happened! You're in danger and disgrace on my account. I must go away—I must do what I should have done at first," and with her face buried in her hands she rocked back and forth overwhelmed by the bitterness and reproach of her thoughts.

"Alida," he urged, "please be calm and sensible. Let me reason with you and tell you the truth. All that's happened is that the Oakville cubs have received a well-deserved whipping. When you get calm, I can explain everything so it won't seem half so bad. Neither you nor I are in any danger, and as for your going away, look me in the eyes and listen."

His words were almost stern in their earnestness. She raised her streaming eyes to his face, then sprang up, exclaiming, "Oh! you're wounded!"

"What's that compared with your talk of going away?"

All explanations and reassurances would have been trivial in effect compared with the truth that he had been hurt in her defence. She dashed her tears right and left, ran for a basin of water, and making him take her chair, began washing away the blood stains.

"Thunder!" he said, laughing, "how quickly we've changed places!"

"Oh, oh," she moaned, "it's a terrible wound; it might have killed you, and they *will* kill you yet."

He took her hands and held them firmly. "Alida," he said, gravely yet kindly, "be still and listen to me."

For a moment or two longer, her bosom heaved with convulsive sobs and then she grew quiet. "Don't you know you can't go away?" he asked, still retaining her hands and looking in her face.

"I could for your sake," she began.

"No, it wouldn't be for my sake. I don't wish you to go, and wouldn't let you. If you should let the Oakville rabble drive you away I *would* be in danger, and so would others, for I'd be worse on 'em than an earthquake. After

the lesson they've had to-night, they'll let us alone, and I'll let them alone. You know I've tried to be honest with you from the first. Believe me, then, the trouble's over, unless we make more for ourselves. Now, promise you'll do as I say and let me manage."

"I'll try," she breathed softly.

"No, no, that won't do. I'm beginning to find you out. You may get some foolish, self-sacrificing notion in your head that it would be best for me, when it would be my ruination. Will you promise?"

"Yes."

"Famous! Now you can bathe my head all you please, for it feels a little queer."

"It's an awful wound," she said in tones of the deepest sympathy. "Oh! I'm so sorry."

"Pshaw! my head is too hard for that little scamp of a Weeks to break. His turn'll come next."

She cut away the blood-clotted hair and bound up the rather severe scalp wound with a tenderness and sympathy that expressed itself even in her touch. She was too confused and excited to be conscious of herself, but she had received some tremendously strong impressions. Chief among them was the truth that nothing which had happened made any difference in him—that he was still the same loyal friend, standing between her and the world she dreaded—yes, between her and her own impulses toward self-sacrifice. Sweetest of all was the assurance that he did this for his own sake as well as hers. These facts seemed like a foothold in the mad torrent of feeling and shame which had been sweeping her away. She could think of little more than that she was safe—safe because he was brave and loyal, and yes, safe because he wanted her and would not give her up. The heart of a woman must be callous indeed, and her nature not only trivial, but stony, if she is not deeply touched under circumstances like these.

In spite of his laughing contempt of danger, she trembled as she saw him ready to go out again; she wished to accom-

pany him on his round of observation, but he scouted the idea, although it pleased him. Standing in the door, she strained her eyes and listened breathlessly. He soon returned and said, "They've all had enough. We won't be disturbed again."

He saw that her nerves needed quieting, and he set about the task with such simple tact as he possessed. His first step was to light his pipe in the most nonchalant manner, and then he burst out laughing. "I'll hang that hickory up. It has done too good service to be put to common use again. Probably you never heard of a skimelton, Alida. Well, they are not so uncommon in this region. I suppose I'll have to own up to taking part in one myself when I was a young chap. They usually are only rough larks and are taken good-naturedly. I'm not on jesting terms with my neighbors and they had no business to come here, but I wouldn't have made any row if they hadn't insulted you."

Her head bowed very low as she faltered, "They've heard everything."

He came right to her and took her hand. "Didn't I hear everything before they did?"

"Yes."

"Well, Alida, I'm not only satisfied with you, but I'm very grateful to you. Why shouldn't I be, when you are a good, Christian woman? I guess I'm the one to be suited, not Oakville. I should be as reckless as the devil if you should go away from me. Don't I act like a man who's ready to stand up for and protect you?"

"Yes, too ready. It would kill me if anything happened to you on my account."

"Well, the worst would happen," he said, firmly, "if we don't go right on as we've begun. If we go quietly on about our own affairs, we'll soon be let alone and that's all we ask."

"Yes, yes indeed. Don't worry, James. I'll do as you wish."

"Famous! You never said 'James' to me before. Why haven't you?"

"I don't know," she faltered, with a sudden rush of color to her pale face.

"Well, that's my name," he resumed, laughing. "I guess it's because we are getting better acquainted."

She looked up and said, impetuously, "You don't know how a woman feels when a man stands up for her as you did to-night."

"Well, I know how a man feels when there is a woman so well worth standing up for. It was a lucky thing that I had nothing heavier in my hand than that hickory." All the while he was looking at her curiously; then he spoke his thought, "You're a quiet little woman, Alida, most times, but you're capable of a thunder-gust now and then."

"I'll try to be quiet at all times," she replied, with drooping eyes.

Oh, I'm not complaining," he said, laughing; "I like the trait."

He took a small pitcher and went to the dairy. Returning, he poured out two glasses of milk and said, "Here's to your health and happiness, Alida; and when I don't stand up for the woman who started out to save me from a mob of murderers, may the next thing I eat or drink choke me. You didn't know they were merely a lot of Oakville boys, did you?"

"You can't make so light of it," said she. "They tried to close on you, and if that stone had struck you on the temple, it might have killed you. They swore like pirates, and looked like ruffians with their blackened faces. They certainly were not boys in appearance."

"I'm afraid I swore too," he said, sadly.

"You had some excuse, but I'm sorry. They would have hurt you if you hadn't kept them off."

"Yes, they'd probably given me a beating. People do things in hot blood they wish they hadn't afterwards. I know this Oakville rough-scuff. Since we've had it out, and they know what to expect, they'll give me a wide berth. Now go and sleep. You were never safer in your life."

She did not trust herself to reply, but the glance she gave him from her tearful eyes was so eloquent with grateful feeling that he was suddenly conscious of some unwonted sensations. He again patrolled the place and tied the dog near the barn.

"It's barely possible that some of these mean cusses might venture to kindle a fire, but a bark from Towser will warn 'em off. She *is* a spirited little woman," he added, with a sharp change in soliloquy. "There's nothing milk and water about her. Thunder! I felt like kissing her when she looked at me so. I guess that crack on my skull has made me a little light-headed."

He lay down in his clothes so that he might rush out in case of alarm, and he intended to keep awake. Then, the first thing he knew, the sun was shining in the windows.

It was long before Alida slept, and the burden of her thoughts confirmed the words that she had spoken so involuntarily. "You don't know how a woman feels when a man stands up for her as you did." It is the nature of her sex to adore hardy, courageous manhood. Beyond all power of expression, Alida felt her need of a champion and protector. She was capable of going away for his sake, but she would go in terror and despair. The words that had smitten her confirmed all her old fears of facing the world alone. Then came the overpowering thought of his loyalty and kindness, of his utter and almost fierce repugnance to the idea of her leaving him. In contrast with the man who had deceived and wronged her, Holcroft's course overwhelmed her very soul with a passion of grateful affection. A new emotion, unlike anything she had ever known, thrilled her heart and covered her face with blushes. "I could die for him," she murmured.

She awoke late in the morning. When at last she entered the kitchen she stopped in deep chagrin, for Holcroft had almost completed preparations for breakfast. "Ha, ha!" he laughed, "turn about is fair play."

"Well," she sighed, "there's no use of making excuses now."

"There's no occasion for any. Did you ever see such a looking case as I am with this bandage around my head?"

"Does it pain you?" she asked, sympathetically.

"Well, it does. It pains like thunder."

"The wound needs dressing again. Let me cleanse and bind it up."

"Yes, after breakfast."

"No, indeed, now. I couldn't eat my breakfast while you were suffering so."

"I'm more unfeeling then than you are, for I could."

She insisted on having her way, and then tore up her handkerchief to supply a soft linen bandage.

"You're extravagant, Alida," but she only shook her head.

"Famous! That feels better. What a touch you have! Now if you had a broken head my fingers would be like a pair of tongs."

She only shook her head and smiled.

"You're as bad as Jane used to be. She never said a word when she could shake or nod her meaning."

"I should think you would be glad, after having been half talked to death by her mother."

"As I said before, take your own way of doing things. It seems the right way after it is done."

A faint color came into her face and she looked positively happy as she sat down to breakfast. "Are you sure your head feels better?" she asked.

"Yes, and you look a hundred per cent better. Well, I *am* glad you had such a good sleep after all the hubbub."

"I didn't sleep till toward morning," she said, with downcast eyes.

"Pshaw! that's too bad. Well, no matter, you look like a different person from what you did when I first saw you. You've been growing younger every day."

Her face flushed like a girl's under his direct, admiring

gaze, making her all the more pretty. She hastened to divert direct attention from herself by asking, "You haven't heard from any one this morning?"

"No, but I guess the doctor has. Some of those fellows will have to keep shady for a while."

As they were finishing breakfast, Holcroft looked out of the open kitchen door and exclaimed, "By thunder! we're going to hear from some of them now. Here comes Mrs. Weeks, the mother of the fellow who hit me."

"Won't you please receive her in the parlor?"

"Yes, she won't stay long, you may be sure. I'm going to give that Weeks tribe one lesson and pay off the whole score."

He merely bowed coldly to Mrs. Weeks's salutation and offered her a chair. The poor woman took out her handkerchief and began to mop her eyes, but Holcroft was steeled against her, not so much on account of the wound inflicted by her son as for the reason that he saw in her an accomplice with her husband in the fraud of Mrs. Mumpson.

"I hope you're not badly hurt," she began.

"It might be worse."

"Oh, Mr. Holcroft," she broke out sobbingly, "spare my son. It would kill me if you sent him to prison."

"He took the chance of killing me last night," was the cold reply. "What's far worse, he insulted my wife."

Oh, Mr. Holcroft, he was young and foolish, he didn't realize—"

"Were you and your husband young and foolish," he interrupted bitterly, "when you gulled me into employing that crazy cousin of yours?"

This retort was so overwhelming that Mrs. Weeks sobbed speechlessly.

Alida could not help overhearing the conversation, and she now glided into the room and stood by her husband's side.

"James," she said, "won't you do me a favor, a great kindness?"

Mrs. Weeks raised her eyes and looked wonderingly

at this dreadful woman, against whom all Oakville was talking.

"I know what you wish, Alida," he replied, sternly, "but I can't do it. This is a case for justice. This woman's son was the leader of that vile crowd that insulted you last night. I can forgive his injuring me, but not the words he used about you. Moreover, when I was alone and struggling to keep my home, Mrs. Weeks took part with her husband in imposing on me their fraud of a cousin and in tricking me out of honest money. Any woman with a heart in her breast would have tried to help a man situated as I was. No, it's a clear case of justice, and her son shall go to jail."

Mrs. Weeks wailed afresh at this final sentence. Holcroft was amazed to see his wife drop on her knees beside his chair. He raised her instantly. "Don't do such a thing as that," he said, huskily.

Without removing her pleading eyes from his face she asked, gently, "Who told us to forgive as we would be forgiven? James, I shall be very unhappy if you don't grant this mother's prayer."

He tried to turn away, but she caught his hand and held his eyes with hers. "Alida," he said, in strong agitation, "you heard the vile, false words that Timothy Weeks said last night. They struck you down like a blow. Can you forgive him?"

"Yes, and I plead with you to forgive him. Grant me my wish, James; I shall be so much happier and so will you."

Well, Mrs. Weeks, now you know what kind of a woman your son came to insult. You may tell your neighbors that there's one Christian in Oakville. I yield to Mrs. Holcroft and will take no further action in the affair if we are let alone."

Mrs. Weeks was not a bad woman at heart, and she had received a wholesome lesson. She came and took Alida's hand as she said, "Yes, you are a Christian—a better woman than I've been, but I ain't so mean and bad but what, when

I see my fault, I am sorry and can ask forgiveness.—I do ask your forgiveness, Mr. Holcroft. I've been ashamed of myself ever since you brought my cousin back. I thought she would try, when she had the chance you gave her, but she seems to have no sense."

"There, there, let bygones be bygones," said the farmer in embarrassment. "I've surrendered. Please don't say anything more."

"You've got a kind heart in spite—"

"Oh, come now, please quit, or I'll begin to swear a little to keep up the reputation my neighbors have given me. Go home and tell Tim to brace up and try to be a man. When I say I'm done with a grudge, I *am* done. You and Mrs. Holcroft can talk all you like, but please excuse me," and with more than most men's horror of a scene, he escaped precipitately.

"Sit down, Mrs. Weeks," said Alida, kindly.

"Well, I will. I can't say much to excuse myself or my folks—"

"You've already said everything, Mrs. Weeks," interrupted Alida, gently, "you've said you are sorry."

Mrs. Weeks stared a moment, and then resumed, sententiously, "Well, I've heard more gospel in that remark than if I'd gone to church. And I couldn't go to church, I could never have gone there again or held my head up anywhere if—if—"

"That's all past and gone," said Alida, smiling. "When Mr. Holcroft says anything, you may depend on it."

"Well, God bless you for intercedin'—you had so much to forgive. Nobody shall ever speak a word against you again while I've got breath to answer. I wish you'd let me come and see you sometimes."

"Whenever you wish, if you care to visit one who has had so much—so much trouble."

"I see now that's all the more reason I should come, for if it hadn't been for you, I'd have been in bitter trouble myself. We've been worse than heathen, standin' off and

talking against you. Oh, I've had a lesson I won't forget. Well, I must hurry home, for I left Timothy and Lemuel in a dreadful state."

Seeing the farmer in the barn as she was passing, she rushed to him. "You've got to shake hands with me, Mr. Holcroft. Your wife *is* a good woman, and she's a lady, too. Any one with half an eye can see she's not one of the common sort."

The farmer shook the poor woman's hand good-naturedly and said heartily, "That's so. All right. Meeting's over. Good-by." Then he turned to his work and chuckled, "That's what Tom Watterly said. Thank the Lord! she *isn't* of the common sort. I've got to brace up and be more of a man as well as Tim Weeks."

In spite of the pain in his head, Alida's words proved true. He was happier than he had been in many a long day. He had the glow which follows a generous act, and the thought that he had pleased a sweet little woman who somehow seemed very attractive to him that May morning; at the same time the old Adam in his nature led to a sneaking satisfaction that he had laid on the hickory so unsparingly the evening before.

Alida uttered a low, happy laugh as she heard him whistling "Coronation" in jig time, and she hustled away the breakfast things with the eagerness of a girl, that she might be ready to read to him when he came in.

CHAPTER XXVII

FARM AND FARMER BEWITCHED

THE day grew warm, and having finished her tasks indoors and cared for the poultry, Alida brought a chair out in the porch. Her eyes were dreamy with a vague, undefined happiness. The landscape in itself was cause for exquisite pleasure, for it was an ideal day of the apple-blossoming period. The old orchard back of the barn looked as if pink and white clouds had settled upon it, and scattered trees near and far were exhaling their fragrance. The light breeze which fanned her cheek and bent the growing rye in an adjacent field was perfumed beyond the skill of art. Not only were her favorite meadow-larks calling to each other, but the thrushes had come and she felt that she had never heard such hymns as they were singing. A burst of song from the lilac bush under the parlor window drew her eyes thither, and there was the paternal redbreast pouring out the very soul of ecstasy. From the nest beneath him rose the black head and yellow beak of his brooding mate. "How contented and happy she looks!" Alida murmured, "how happy they both are! and the secret of it is, *home*. And to think that I, who was a friendless waif, am at home, also! At home with Eden-like beauty and peace before my eyes. But if it hadn't been for him, and if he were not brave, kind and true to all he says—" and she shuddered at a contrast that rose before her fancy.

She could now scarcely satisfy herself that it was only gratitude which filled her heart with a strange, happy tumult. She had never been conscious of such exaltation before. It

is true, she had learned to cherish a strong affection for the man whom she had believed to be her husband, but chiefly because he had seemed kind and she had an affectionate disposition. Until within the last few hours, her nature had never been touched and awakened in its profoundest depths. She had never known before nor had she idealized the manhood capable of evoking the feelings which now lightened her eyes and gave to her face the supreme charm and beauty of womanhood. In truth, it was a fitting day and time for the birth of a love like hers, simple, all-absorbing and grateful. It contained no element not in harmony with that May Sunday morning.

Holcroft came and sat on the steps below her. She kept her eyes on the landscape, for she was consciously enough on her guard now. "I rather guess you think, Alida, that you are looking at a better picture than any artist fellow could paint?" he remarked.

"Yes," she replied, hesitatingly, "and the picture seems all the more lovely and full of light because the background is so very dark. I've been thinking of what happened here last night and what might have happened, and how I felt then."

"You feel better—different now, don't you? You certainly look so."

"Yes, you made me very happy by yielding to Mrs. Weeks."

"Oh, I didn't yield to her at all."

"Very well, have it your own way then."

"I think you had it your way."

"Are you sorry?"

"Do I look so? How did you know I'd be happier if I gave in?"

"Because, as you say, I'm getting better acquainted with you. *You* couldn't help being happier for a generous act."

"I wouldn't have done it, though, if it hadn't been for you."

"I'm not so sure about that."

"I am. You're coming to make me feel confoundedly uncomfortable in my heathenish life."

"I wish I could."

"I never had such a sermon in my life as you gave me this morning. A Christian act like yours is worth a year of religious talk."

She looked at him wistfully for a moment and then asked, a little abruptly, "Mr. Holcroft, have you truly forgiven that Weeks family?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. I've forgiven the old lady, anyhow. I've shaken hands with her."

"If her husband and son should come and apologize and say they were sorry, would you truly and honestly forgive them?"

"Certainly. I couldn't hold a grudge after that. What are you aiming at?" and he turned and looked inquiringly into her face.

It was flushed and tearful in its eager, earnest interest. "Don't you see?" she faltered.

He shook his head, but was suddenly and strangely moved by her expression.

"Why, Mr. Holcroft, if you can honestly forgive those who have wronged you, you ought to see how ready God is to forgive."

He fairly started to his feet, so vividly the truth came home to him, illumined, as it was, by a recent and personal experience. After a moment, he slowly sat down again and said, with a long breath, "That was a close shot, Alida."

"I only wish you to have the trust and comfort which this truth should bring you," she said. "It seems a pity you should do yourself needless injustice when you are willing to do what is right and kind by others."

"It's all a terrible muddle, Alida. If God is so ready to forgive, how do you account for all the evil and suffering in the world?"

"I don't account for it and can't. I'm only one of his little children, often an erring one, too. You've been able to

forgive grown people, your equals, and strangers in a sense. Suppose you had a little boy that had done wrong, but said he was sorry, would you hold a grudge against him?"

"The idea! I'd be a brute."

She laughed softly as she asked again, "Don't you see?"

He sat looking thoughtfully away across the fields for a long time, and finally asked, "Is your idea of becoming a Christian just being forgiven like a child and then trying to do right?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Well," he remarked, with a grim laugh, "I didn't expect to be cornered in this way."

"You who are truthful should face the truth. It would make you happier. A good deal that was unexpected has happened. When I look out on a scene like this and think that I am safe and at home, I feel that God has been very good to me and that you have, too. I can't bear to think that you have that old trouble on your mind—the feeling that you had been a Christian once, but was not one now. Being sure that there is no need of your continuing to feel so, what sort of return would I be making for all your kindness if I did not try to show you what is as clear to me as this sunshine?"

"You are a good woman, Alida. Believing as you do, you have done right to speak to me, and I never believed mortal lips could speak so to the purpose. I shall think of what you have said, for you have put things in a new light. But say, Alida, what on earth possesses you to call me 'Mr.'? You said James easy enough after the skimelton was over and when old lady Weeks was begging Tim off. You don't need to be scared half to death every time to call me by my first name, do you?"

"Scared? Oh, no." She was a trifle confused, he thought, but then her tone was completely reassuring.

The day was one long remembered by both. As in nature about them, the conditions of development and rapid change now existed. She did not read aloud very much, and long

silences fell between them. They were reaching a higher plane of companionship, in which words are not always essential. Both had much to think about, and their thoughts were like roots which prepare for blossom and fruit.

With Monday, busy life was resumed. The farmer began planting his corn and Alida her flower seeds. Almost every day now added to the brood of little chicks under her care. The cows went out to pasture, Holcroft brought in an increasing number of overflowing pails of milk, and if the labors of the dairy grew more exacting, they also grew more profitable. The tide had turned; income was larger than outgo, and it truly seemed to the long-harassed man that an era of peace and prosperity had set in.

To a superficial observer things might have appeared to be going on much as before, but there were influences at work which Holcroft did not clearly comprehend.

As Alida had promised herself, she spent all the money which the eggs brought in, but Holcroft found pretty muslin curtains at the parlor windows, and shades which excluded the glare from the kitchen. Better china took the place of that which was cracked and unsightly. In brief, a subtile and refining touch was apparent all over the house.

"How fine we are getting!" he remarked one evening at supper.

"I've only made a beginning," she replied, nodding defiantly at him. "The chickens will paint the house before the year is over."

"Phew! when do the silk dresses come in?"

"When your broadcloth does."

"Well, if this goes on, I shall certainly have to wear purple and fine linen to keep pace."

"Fine linen certainly. When you take the next lot of eggs to town I shall tell you just the number of yards I need to make half a dozen extra fine shirts. Those you have are getting past mending."

"Do you think I'll let you spend your money in that way?"

"You'll let me spend *my* money just as I please—in the way that will do me the most good!"

"What a saucy little woman you are becoming!" he said, looking at her so fondly that she quickly averted her eyes.

"It's a way people fall into when humored," she answered.

"See here, Alida, you're up to some magic. It seems but the other day I brought you here, a pale ghost of a woman. As old Jonathan Johnson said, you were 'en'j'yin' poor health.' Do you know what he said when I took him off so he wouldn't put you through the catechism?"

"No," she replied, with a deprecating smile and rising color.

"He said he was 'afeared I'd been taken in, you were such a sickly lookin' critter.' Ha! ha! Wish he might see you now, with that flushed face of yours. I never believed in magic, but I'll have to come to it. You are bewitched, and are being transformed into a pretty young girl right under my eyes; the house is bewitched, and is growing pretty, too, and pleasanter all the time. The cherry and apple trees are bewitched, for they never blossomed so before; the hens are bewitched, they lay as if possessed; the—"

"Oh, stop, or I shall think that you're bewitched yourself."

"I truly begin to think I am."

"Oh, well, since we all and everything are affected in the same way, it don't matter."

"But it does. It's unaccountable. I'm beginning to rub my eyes and pinch myself to wake up."

"If you like it, I wouldn't wake up."

"Suppose I did, and saw Mrs. Mumpson sitting where you do, Jane here, and Mrs. Wiggins smoking her pipe in the corner. The very thought makes me shiver. My first words would be, 'Please pass the cold p'ison.' "

"What nonsense you are talking to-night!" she tried to say severely, but the pleased, happy look in her eyes betrayed her. He regarded her with the open admiration of a

boy, and she sought to divert his attention by asking, "What do you think has become of Jane?"

"I don't know—stealing around like a strange cat in some relation's house, I suppose."

"You once said you would like to do something for her."

"Well, I would. If I could afford it I'd like to send her to school."

"Would you like her to come here and study lessons part of the time?"

He shivered visibly. "No, 'Alida, and you wouldn't either. She'd make you more nervous than she would me, and that's saying a good deal. I do feel very sorry for her, and if Mrs. Weeks comes to see you, we'll find out if something can't be done, but her presence would spoil all our cosey comfort. The fact is, I wouldn't enjoy having any one here. You and I are just about company enough. Still, if you feel that you'd like to have some help—"

"Oh, no, I haven't enough to do."

"But you're always a-doing. Well, if you're content, I haven't Christian fortitude enough to make any changes."

She smiled and thought that she was more than content. She had begun to detect symptoms in her husband which her own heart enabled her to interpret. In brief, it looked as if he were drifting on a smooth, swift tide to the same haven in which she was anchored.

One unusually warm morning for the season, rain set in after breakfast. Holcroft did not fret in the least that he could not go to the fields, nor did he, as had been his custom at first, find rainy-day work at the barn. The cows, in cropping the lush grass, had so increased their yield of milk that it was necessary to churn every other day, and Alida was busy in the dairy. This place had become inviting by reason of its coolness, and she had rendered it more so by making it perfectly clean and sweet. Strange to say, it contained another chair besides the one she usually occupied. The apartment was large and stone-flagged. Along one side were shelves filled with rows of shining milk pans. In one

corner stood the simple machinery which the old dog put in motion when tied upon his movable walk, and the churn was near. An iron pipe, buried deep in the ground, brought cool spring water from the brook above. This pipe emptied its contents with a low gurgle into a shallow, oblong receptacle sunk in the floor, and was wide and deep enough for two stone crocks of ample size to stand abreast up to their rims in the water. The cream was skimmed into these stone jars until they were full, then Holcroft emptied them into the churn. He had charged Alida never to attempt this part of the work, and indeed it was beyond her strength. After breakfast on churning days, he prepared everything and set the dog at work. Then he emptied the churn of the buttermilk when he came in to dinner.

All the associations of the place were pleasant to Alida. It was here that her husband had shown patience as well as kindness in teaching her how to supplement his work until her own experience and judgment gave her a better skill than he possessed. Many pleasant, laughing words had passed between them in this cool, shadowy place, and on a former rainy morning he had brought a chair down that he might keep her company. She had not carried it back, nor was she very greatly surprised to see him saunter in and occupy it on the present occasion. She stood by the churn, her figure outlined clearly in the light from the open door, as she poured in cold water from time to time to hasten and harden the gathering butter. Her right sleeve was rolled well back, revealing a white arm that was becoming beautifully plump and round. An artist would have said that her attitude and action were unconsciously natural and graceful. Holcroft had scarcely the remotest idea of artistic effect, but he had a sensible man's perception of a charming woman when she is charming.

"Mr. Holcroft," she asked very gravely, "will you do something for me?"

"Yes, half a dozen things."

"You promise?"

"Certainly. What's the trouble?"

"I don't mean there shall be any if I can help it," she answered with a light ripple of laughter. "Please go and put on your coat."

"How you humbugged me! It's too hot."

"Oh, you've got to do it; you promised. You can't stay here unless you do."

"So you are going to take care of me as if I were a small boy?"

"You need care—sometimes."

He soon came back and asked, "Now may I stay?"

"Yes. Please untie the dog. Butter's come."

"I should think it would, or anything else at your coaxing."

"Oh-h, what a speech! Hasn't that a pretty golden hue?" she asked, holding up a mass of the butter she was ladling from the churn into a wooden tray.

"Yes, you are making the gilt-edge article now. I don't have to sell it to Tom Watterly any more."

"I'd like to give him some, though."

He was silent, and something like sudden rage burned in his heart that Mrs. Watterly would not permit the gift. That any one should frown on his having such a helper as Alida was proving herself to be, made him vindictive. Fortunately her face was turned away and she did not see his heavy frown. Then, to shield her from a disagreeable fact, he said quickly, "Do you know that for over a year I steadily went behind my expenses, and that your butter-making has turned the tide already? I'm beginning to get ahead again."

"I'm *so* glad," and her face was radiant.

"Yes, I should know that from your looks. It's clearer every day that I got the best of our bargain. I never dreamed, though, that I should enjoy your society as I do—that we should become such very good friends. That wasn't in the bargain, was it?"

"Bargain!" The spirited way with which she echoed

the word, as if thereby repudiating anything like a sordid side to their mutual relations, was not lost on her wondering and admiring partner. She checked herself suddenly. "Now let me teach *you* how to make butter," and with the tray in her lap, she began washing the golden product and pressing out the milk.

He laughed in a confused, delighted way at her piquant, half saucy manner as he watched her deft round arm and shapely hand.

"The farmers' wives in Oakville would say your hands were too little to do much."

"They would?" and she raised her blue eyes indignantly to his. "No matter, you are the one to say about that."

"I say they do too much. I shall have to get Jane to help you."

"By all means. Then you'll have more society."

"That was a home shot. You know how I dote on everybody's absence, even Jane's."

"You dote on butter. See how firm and yellow it's getting. You wouldn't think it was milk-white cream a little while ago, would you? Now I'll put in the salt and you must taste it, for you're a connoisseur."

"A what!"

"Judge, then."

"You know a sight more than I do, Alida."

"I'm learning all the time."

"So am I—to appreciate you."

"Listen to the sound of the rain and the water as it runs into the milk-cooler. It's like low music, isn't it?"

Poor Holcroft could make no better answer than a sneeze.

"Oh-h," she exclaimed, "you're catching cold! Come, you must go right upstairs. You can't stay here another minute. I'm nearly through.

"I was never more contented in my life."

"You've no right to worry me. What would I do if you got sick? Come, I'll stop work till you go."

"Well then, little boss, good-by."

With a half suppressed smile at his obedience Alida watched his reluctant departure. She kept on diligently at work, but one might have fancied that her thoughts rather than her exertions were flushing her cheeks.

It seemed to her that but a few moments elapsed before she followed him, but he had gone. Then she saw that the rain had ceased and that the clouds were breaking. His cheerful whistle sounded reassuringly from the barn, and a little later he drove up the lane with a cart.

She sat down in the kitchen and began sewing on the fine linen they had jested about. Before long she heard a light step. Glancing up, she saw the most peculiar and uncanny looking child that had ever crossed her vision and with dismal presentiment knew it was Jane.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANOTHER WAIF

IT was indeed poor, forlorn little Jane that had appeared like a spectre in the kitchen door. She was as wet and bedraggled as a chicken caught in a shower. A little felt hat hung limp over her ears; her pigtail braid had lost its string and was unraveling at the end, and her torn, sodden shoes were ready to drop from her feet. She looked both curiously and apprehensively at Alida with her little blinking eyes, and then asked in a sort of breathless voice, "Where's him?"

"Mr. Holcroft?"

Jane nodded.

"He's gone out to the fields. You are Jane, aren't you?"

Another nod.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Alida mentally; "I wish she hadn't come." Then with a flush of shame the thought crossed her mind, "She perhaps is as friendless and homeless as I was, and 'him' is also her only hope.—Come in, Jane," she said kindly, "and tell me everything."

"Be you his new girl?"

"I'm his wife," said Alida, smiling.

Jane stopped; her mouth opened and her eyes twinkled with dismay. "Then he is married after all?" she gasped.

"Yes, why not?"

"Mother said he'd never get any one to take him."

"Well, you see she was mistaken."

"She's wrong about everything. Well, it's no use then," and the child turned and sat down on the doorstep.

Alida was perplexed. From the way Jane wiped her

eyes with her wet sleeve, she was evidently crying. Coming to her, Alida said, "What is no use, Jane? Why are you crying?"

"I thought—he—might—p'raps—let me stay and work for him."

Alida was still more perplexed. What could be said by way of comfort, feeling sure as she did that Holcroft would be bitterly hostile to the idea of keeping the child? The best she could do was to draw the little waif out and obtain some explanation of her unexpected appearance. But first she asked, "Have you had any breakfast?"

Jane shook her head.

"Oh, then you must have some right away."

"Don't want any. I want to die. I oughtn'ter been born."

"Tell me your troubles, Jane. Perhaps I can help you."

"No, you'd be like the rest. They all hate me and make me feel I'm in the way. He's the only one that didn't make me feel like a stray cat, and now he's gone and got married," and the child sobbed aloud.

Her grief was pitiful to see, for it was overwhelming. Alida stooped down, and gently lifting the child up, brought her in. Then she took off the wet hat and wiped the tear-stained face with her handkerchief. "Wait a minute, Jane, till I bring you something," and she ran to the dairy for a glass of milk. "You must drink it," she said, kindly, but firmly.

The child gulped it down, and with it much of her grief, for this was unprecedented treatment and was winning her attention.

"Say," she faltered, "will you ask him to let me stay?"

"Yes, I'll ask him, but I can't promise that he will."

"You won't ask him 'fore my face and then tell him not to behind my back?" and there was a sly, keen look in her eyes which tears could not conceal.

"No," said Alida, gravely, "that's not my way. How did you get here, Jane?"

"Run away."

"From where?"

"Poorhouse."

Alida drew a quick breath and was silent a few moments. "Is—is your mother there?" she asked at length.

"Yes. They wouldn't let us visit round any longer."

"Didn't your mother or any one know you were coming?"

Jane shook her head.

Alida felt that it would be useless to burden the unhappy child with misgivings as to the result, and her heart softened toward her as one who in her limited way had known the bitterness and dread which in that same almshouse had overwhelmed her own spirit. She could only say gently, "Well, wait till Mr. Holcroft comes, and then we'll see what he says." She herself was both curious and anxious as to his course. "It will be a heavy cross," she thought, "but I should little deserve God's goodness to me if I did not befriend this child."

Every moment added weight to this unexpected burden of duty. Apart from all consideration of Jane's peculiarities, the isolation with Holcroft had been a delight in itself. Their mutual enjoyment of each other's society had been growing from day to day, and she, more truly than he, had shrunk from the presence of another as an unwelcome intrusion. Conscious of her secret, Jane's prying eyes were already beginning to irritate her nerves. Never had she seen a human face that so completely embodied her idea of inquisitiveness as the uncanny visage of this child. She saw that she would be watched with a tireless vigilance. Her recoil, however, was not so much a matter of conscious reasoning and perception as it was an instinctive feeling of repulsion caused by the unfortunate child. It was the same old story. Jane always put the women of the household on pins and needles just as her mother exasperated the men. Alida had to struggle hard during a comparatively silent hour to fight down the hope that Holcroft would not listen to Jane's and her own request.

As she stepped quickly and lightly about in her preparations for dinner, the girl watched her intently. At last she gave voice to her thoughts and said, "If mother'd only worked round smart as you, p'raps she'd hooked him 'stid er you."

Alida's only reply was a slight frown, for the remark suggested disagreeable images and fancies. "Oh, how can I endure it?" she sighed. She determined to let Jane plead her own cause at first, thinking that perhaps this would be the safest way. If necessary, she would use her influence against a hostile decision, let it cost in discomfort what it might.

At a few moments before twelve the farmer came briskly toward the house, and was evidently in the best of spirits. When he entered and saw Jane, his countenance indicated so much dismay that Alida could scarcely repress a smile. The child rose and stood before him like a culprit awaiting sentence. She winked hard to keep the tears back, for there was no welcome in his manner. She could not know how intensely distasteful was her presence at this time, nor had Holcroft himself imagined how unwelcome a third person in his house could be until he saw the intruder before him. He had only felt that he was wonderfully contented and happy in his home and that Jane would be a constant source of annoyance and restraint. Moreover, it might lead to visitation from Mrs. Mumpson, and that was the summing up of earthly ills. But the child's appearance and manner were so forlorn and deprecating that words of irritation died upon his lips. He gravely shook hands with her and then drew out the story which Alida had learned.

"Why, Jane," he exclaimed, frowning, "Mr. Watterly will be scouring the country for you. I shall have to take you back right after dinner."

"I kinder hoped," she sobbed, "that you'd let me stay. I'd stay in the barn if I couldn't be in the house. I'd just as soon work outdoors, too."

"I don't think you'd be allowed to stay," said the farmer,

with a sinking heart; "and then—perhaps your mother would be coming here."

"I can't stand mother no more'n you can," said the girl, through her set teeth. "I oughtn'ter been born, for there's no place for me in the world."

Holcroft looked at his wife, his face expressive of the utmost annoyance, worry and irresolution. Her glance was sympathetic, but she said nothing, feeling that if he could make the sacrifice from his own will he should have the chance. "You can't begin to know how much trouble this may lead to, Jane," he resumed. "You remember how your mother threatened to take the law upon me, and it wouldn't be possible for you to stay here without her consent."

"She oughter consent; I'll make her consent," cried the child, speaking as if driven to desperation. "What's she ever done for me but teach me mean ways? Keep me or kill me, for I must be in some place where I've a right to be away from mother. I've found that there's no sense in her talk and it drives me crazy."

Although Jane's words and utterance were strangely uncouth, they contained a despairing echo which the farmer could not resist. Turning his troubled face to his wife, he began, "If this is possible, Alida, it will be a great deal harder on you than it will on me. I don't feel that I would be doing right by you unless you gave your consent with full knowledge of—"

"Then please let her stay, if it is possible. She seems to need a friend and home as much as another that you heard about."

"There's no chance of such a blessed reward in this case," he replied, with a grim laugh. Then, perplexed indeed, he continued to Jane, "I'm just as sorry for you as I can be, but there's no use of getting my wife and self in trouble which in the end will do you no good. You are too young to understand all that your staying may lead to."

"It won't lead to mother's comin' here, and that's the

worst that could happen. Since she can't do anything for me she's got to let me do for myself."

"Alida, please come with me in the parlor a moment.—You stay here, Jane." When they were alone, he resumed, "Somehow, I feel strangely unwilling to have that child live with us. We were enjoying our quiet life so much. Then you don't realize how uncomfortable she will make you, Alida."

"Yes, I do."

"I don't think you can yet. Your sympathies are touched now, but she'll watch you and irritate you in a hundred ways. Don't her very presence make you uncomfortable?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, she can't stay," he began, decidedly. "This is your home and no one shall make you uncomfortable—"

"But I should be a great deal more uncomfortable if she didn't stay," Alida interrupted. "I should feel that I did not deserve my home. Not long ago, my heart was breaking because I was friendless and in trouble. What could I think of myself if I did not entreat you in behalf of this poor child?"

"Thunder!" ejaculated Holcroft. "I guess I was rather friendless and troubled myself and I didn't know the world had in it such a good friend as you've become, Alida. Well, well, you've put it in such a light that I'd be almost tempted to take the mother, also."

"No," she replied, laughing, "we'll draw the line at the mother."

"Well, I'll take Jane to town this afternoon, and if her mother will sign an agreement to leave us all in peace, we'll give up our old cosey comfort of being alone. I suppose it must be a good deed, since it's so mighty hard to do it," he concluded with a wry face, leading the way to the kitchen again. She smiled as if his words were already rewarding her self-denial.

"Well, Jane," he resumed, "Mrs. Holcroft has spoken in

your behalf, and if we can arrange matters so that you can stay you will have her to thank chiefly. I'll take you back to the poorhouse after dinner, so it may be known what's become of you. Then if your mother'll sign an agreement to make no trouble and not come here, we'll give you a home until we can find a better place for you."

There was no outburst of gratitude. The repressed, dwarfed nature of the child was incapable of this, yet there was an unwonted little thrill of hope in her heart. Possibly it was like the beginning of life in a seed under the first spring rays of the sun. She merely nodded to Holcroft as if the matter had been settled as far as it could be and ignored Alida.

"Why don't you thank Mrs. Holcroft?" he asked.

Then Jane turned and nodded at Alida. Her vocabulary of thanks was undeveloped.

"She's glad," said Alida. "You'll see.—Now that it's settled, we hope you're hungry, Jane, aren't you?"

"Yes, I be. Can't I help you put things on the table?"

"Yes."

Holcroft looked at the two for a moment and then shook his head as he went up to his room. "I thought my wife was nice and pleasant-looking before," he thought, "but she's like a picture beside that child. Well, she has behaved handsomely. Tom Watterly didn't tell half the truth when he said she was not of the common run. She's a Christian in deeds, not talk. What's that in Scripture about 'I was hungry'? Well, well, she makes religion kind of natural and plain like, whether it's easy or not. Thunder! what a joke it is to see her so grateful because I've given her a chance to help me out of the worst scrape a man could be in! As if she hadn't changed everything for the better! Here I am sure of my home and getting ahead in the world again, and it's all her doing."

In admiration of his wife, Holcroft quite forgot that there had been any self-sacrifice on his part, and he concluded that he could endure Jane and almost anything else as

long as Alida continued to look after his comfort and interests.

Now that the worst stress of Jane's anxiety was over, she proved that she was half starved. Indeed, she had few misgivings now, for her confidence that Holcroft would accomplish what he attempted was almost unbounded. It was a rather silent meal at first, for the farmer and his wife had much to think about and Jane much to do in making up for many limited meals. At last Holcroft smiled so broadly that Alida said, "Something seems to please you."

"Yes, more than one thing. It might be a great deal worse, and was, not long ago. I was thinking of old times."

"How pleasant they must have been, to make you look so happy!"

"They had their uses, and make me think of a picture I saw in a store window in town. It was a picture of a woman, and she took my fancy amazingly. But the point uppermost in my mind was a trick of the fellow who painted her. He had made the background as dark as night and so she stood out as if alive; and she looked so sweet and good that I felt like shaking hands with her. I now see why the painter made the background so dark."

Alida smiled mischievously as she replied, "That was his art. He knew that almost any one would appear well against such a background."

But Holcroft was much too direct to be diverted from his thought or its expression. "The man knew the mighty nice-looking woman he had painted would look well," he said, "and I know of another woman who appears better against a darker background. That's enough to make a man smile who has been through what I have."

She could not help a flush of pleasure or disguise the happy light in her eyes, but she looked significantly at Jane, who, mystified and curious, was glancing from one to the other.

"Confound it!" thought the farmer. "That'll be the way

of it now. Here's a little pitcher that is nearly all ears. Well, we're in for it and must do our duty."

Going to town that day involved no slight inconvenience, but Holcroft dropped everything and rapidly made his preparations.

When Alida was left alone with Jane, the latter began clearing the table with alacrity, and, after a few furtive glances at Mrs. Holcroft, yielded to the feeling that she should make some acknowledgment of the intercession in her behalf. "Say," she began, "I thought you wasn't goin' to stand up for me after all. Woman folks are liars, mostly."

"You are mistaken, Jane. If you wish to stay with us, you must tell the truth and drop all sly ways."

"That's what he said when I first come."

"I say it too. You see a good deal, Jane. Try to see what will please people instead of what you can find out about them. It's a much better plan. Now, as a friend, I tell you of one thing you had better not do. You shouldn't watch and listen to Mr. Holcroft unless he speaks to you. He doesn't like to be watched—no one does. It isn't nice; and if you come to us, I think you will try to do what is nice. Am I not right?"

"I dunno how," said Jane.

"It will be part of my business to teach you. You ought to understand all about your coming. Mr. Holcroft doesn't take you because he needs your work, but because he's sorry for you, and wishes to give you a chance to do better and learn something. You must make up your mind to lessons, and learning to talk and act nicely, as well as to do such work as is given you. Are you willing to do what I say and mind me pleasantly and promptly?"

Jane looked askance at the speaker and was vaguely suspicious of some trick. In her previous sojourn at the farmhouse she had concluded that it was her best policy to keep in Holcroft's good graces, even though she had to defy her mother and Mrs. Wiggins, and she was now by no means

ready to commit herself to this new domestic power. She had received the impression that the authority and continued residence of females in this household was involved in much uncertainty, and although Alida was in favor now and the farmer's wife, she didn't know what "vicissitudes" (as her mother would indicate them) might occur. Holcroft was the only fixed and certain quantity in her troubled thoughts, and after a little hesitation she replied, "I'll do what he says; I'm goin' to mind him."

"Suppose he tells you to mind me?"

"Then I will. That 'ud be mindin' him. I'm goin' to stick to him, for I made out by it better before than by mindin' mother and Mrs. Wiggins."

Alida now understood the child and laughed aloud. "You are right," she said. "I won't ask you to do anything contrary to his wishes. Now tell me, Jane, what other clothes have you besides those you are wearing?"

It did not take the girl long to inventory her scanty wardrobe, and then Alida rapidly made out a list of what was needed immediately. "Wait here," she said, and putting on a pretty straw hat, one of her recent purchases, she started for the barn.

Holcroft had his wagon and team almost ready when Alida joined him, and led the way to the floor between the sweet-smelling hay-mows.

"One thing leads to another," she began, looking at him a little deprecatingly. "You must have noticed the condition of Jane's clothes."

"She does look like a little scarecrow, now I come to think of it," he admitted.

"Yes, she's not much better off than I was," Alida returned, with downcast eyes and rising color.

Her flushing face was so pretty under the straw hat, and the dark mow as a background brought out her figure so finely, that he thought of the picture again and laughed aloud for pleasure. She looked up in questioning surprise, thus adding a new grace.

"I wish that artist fellow was here now," he exclaimed. "He could make another picture that would suit me better than the one I saw in town."

"What nonsense!" she cried, quickly averting her face from his admiring scrutiny. "Come, I'm here to talk business and you've no time to waste. I've made out a list of what the child actually must have to be respectable."

"You're right, Alida," said the farmer, becoming grave at once over a question of dollars and cents. "As you say, one thing leads to another, and if we take the girl we must clothe her decently. But then, I guess she'll earn enough to pay her way. It isn't that I worry about so much," he broke out, discontentedly, "but the interference with our quiet, cosey life. Things are going so smoothly and pleasantly that I hate a change of any kind."

"We mustn't be selfish, you know," she replied. "You are doing a kind, generous act, and I respect you all the more for it."

"That settles everything. You'll like me a little better for it, too, won't you?" he asked, hesitatingly.

She laughed outright at this question and answered, "It won't do to take too much self-sacrifice out of your act. That's something which does us all good. She ought to have a spelling and a writing book also."

Holcroft was assuredly falling under the sway of the little blind god, for he began at once to misunderstand Alida. "'You are very fond of self-sacrifice," he said, rather stiffly. "Yes, I'll get everything on your list," and he took it from her hand. "Now I must be off," he added, "for I wish to get back before night, and it's so warm I can't drive fast. Sorry I have to go, for I can't say I dote on self-sacrifice."

Alida but partially understood his sudden change of mood, nor was the farmer much better enlightened himself in regard to his irritation. He had received an unexpected impression and it seemed to fit in with other things and explain them. She returned slowly and dejectedly to the house, leaving unsaid the words she meant to speak about

Jane's relations to her. Now she wished that she had imitated Jane, and merely nodded to the farmer's question. "If he knew how far I am beyond the point of liking, I don't know what he'd do or say," she thought, "and I suppose that's the reason I couldn't answer him frankly, in a way that would have satisfied him. It's a pity I couldn't begin to just *like* a little at first, as he does, and have everything grow as gradually and quietly as one of his cornstalks. That's the way I meant it should be; but when he stood up for me and defended me from those men, my heart just melted, and in spite of myself, I felt I could die for him. It can't be such an awful thing for a woman to fall in love with her husband, and yet—yet I'd rather put my hand in the fire than let him know how I feel. Oh, dear! I wish Jane hadn't been born, as she says. Trouble is beginning already, and it was all so nice before she came."

In a few moments Holcroft drove up. Alida stood in the door and looked timidly at him. He thought she appeared a little pale and troubled, but his bad mood prevailed and he only asked briefly, "Can't I get something for you?"

She shook her head.

"Well, good-by, then," and he drove away with Jane, who was confirmed in her line of policy. "She's afraid of 'im too," thought the child. "Mind her! guess not, unless he says so." She watched the farmer furtively and concluded that she had never known him to look more grim or be more silent even under her mother's blandishments. "He's married this one, I s'pose, to keep house for 'im, but he don't like her follerin' 'im up or bein' for'ard any more'n he did mother. Shouldn't wonder if he didn't keep her, either, if she don't suit better. She needn't 'a' put on such airs with me, for I'm goin' to stick to him."

CHAPTER XXIX

HUSBAND AND WIFE IN TROUBLE

LIKE many others with simple, strong natures, Holcroft could not be wrong-headed moderately, and his thoughts, once started in a direction, were apt to carry him much further than the cause warranted. Engrossed in painful and rather bitter musings, he paid no heed to Jane, and almost forgot his errand to town. "I was a fool to ask that question," he thought. "I was getting silly and sentimental with my talk about the picture and all that. She laughed at me and reminded me I was wasting time. Of course she can't like an old, hard-featured man like me. I'm beginning to understand her now. She made a business marriage with me and means to live up to her agreement. She's honest; she feels I've done her a great kindness in giving her a home, and she's willing to be as self-sacrificing as the day is long to make it up to me. I wish she wasn't so grateful; there's no occasion for it. I don't want her to feel that every pleasant word and every nice act is so much toward paying a debt. If there was any balance in my favor, it was squared up long ago, and I was willing to call it even from the start. She's made me like her for her own sake and not on account of what she does for me, and that's what I had in mind. But she's my superior in every way; she's growing to be as pretty as a picture and I suppose I appear like a rather rough customer. Well, I can't help it, but it rather goes against me to have her think, 'I've married him and I'm going to do my duty by him just as I agreed.' She'll do her duty by this Jane in the same self-sacrificing spirit, and will try to make it pleasant for the child just be-

cause it's right and because she herself was taken out of trouble. That's the shape her religion takes. 'Tisn't a common form, I know—this returning good for good with compound interest. But her conscience won't let her rest unless she does everything she can for me, and now she'll begin to do everything for Jane because she feels that self-sacrifice is a duty. Anybody can be self-sacrificing. If I made up my mind, I could ask Mrs. Mumpson to visit us all summer, but I couldn't like her to save my life, and I don't suppose Alida can like me, beyond a certain point, to save her life. But she'll do her duty. She'll be pleasant and self-sacrificing and do all the work she can lay her hands on for my sake; but when it comes to feeling toward me as I can't help feeling toward her—that wasn't in the bargain," and he startled Jane with a sudden bitter laugh.

"Say," said the child, as if bent on adding another poignant reflection, "if you hadn't married her I could 'a' come and cooked for you."

"You think I'd been better off if I'd waited for you, eh?"

"You kinder looked as if yer thought so."

He now made the hills echo with a laugh, excited both by his bitter fancies and the preposterous idea. She looked at him inquiringly and was much perplexed by his unwonted behavior. Indeed, he was slightly astonished at his own strange mood, but he yielded to it almost recklessly. "I say, Jane," he began, "I'm not a very good-looking man, am I?"

She shook her head in emphatic agreement.

"I'm old and rough and hard-featured?"

Again she nodded approvingly.

"Children and some others speak the truth," he growled.

"I never had no teachin', but I'm not a fool," remarked Jane, keenly.

"I guess I'm the fool in this case," he added.

"It don't make no difference to me," she said, sympathetically. "I'm goin' to mind you and not her. If you ever send her away I'll cook for you."

"Send her away!" exclaimed the farmer, with a shiver. "God forbid. There, don't talk any more."

For the next half mile he drove in silence, with a heavy frown on his face; then he broke out sternly, "If you don't promise to mind Mrs. Holcroft and please her in everything, I'll leave you at the poorhouse door and drive home again."

"Course I will, if you tells me to," said the child in trepidation.

"Well, I *do*. People will find that making her trouble is the surest way of making themselves trouble."

"She's got some hold on 'im," concluded Jane, who, in listening to much gossip, had often heard this expression, and now made a practical application of the idea.

Watterly was greatly relieved when he saw Holcroft drive up with the fugitive. "I was just going out to your place," he said, "for the girl's mother insisted that you had enticed the child away," and the man laughed, as if the idea tickled him immensely.

Holcroft frowned, for he was in no mood for his friend's rough jests. "Go to your mother till I send for you," he said to Jane.

"The fact that you had taken two other females from the house gave some color to Mrs. Mumpson's view," pursued Watterly, who could take only the broadest hint as to his social conduct.

He received one now. "Tom Watterly," said the farmer, sternly, "did I ever insult your wife?"

"By jocks! no, you nor no other man. I should say not."

"Well, then, don't you insult mine. Before I'd seen Mrs. Holcroft, you told me she was out of the common run—how much out, you little know—and I don't want her mixed up with the common run, even in your thoughts."

"Well, now, I like that," said Watterly, giving Holcroft his hand. "You know I didn't mean any offence, Jim. It was only one of my foolish jokes. You were mighty slow to promise to love, honor and obey, but hanged if you ain't

more on that line than any man in town. I can see she's turning out well and keeping her agreement."

"Yes, that's just what she's doing," said the farmer, gloomily. "She's a good, capable woman that'll sacrifice herself to her duty any day. But it wasn't to talk about her that I came. She's a sight better than I am, but she's probably not good enough for anybody in this town to speak to."

"Oh, pshaw, now, Jim!"

"Well, I've come on disagreeable business. I didn't know that Mrs. Mumpson and her child were here, and I wish to the Lord they could both stay here! You've found out what the mother is, I suppose?"

"I should say so," replied Tom, laughing. "She's talked several of the old women to death already. The first day she was here she called on my wife and claimed social relations, because she's so 'respecterbly connected,' as she says. I thought Angy'd have a fit. Her respectable connections have got to take her off my hands."

"I'm not one of 'em, thank goodness," resumed Holcroft. "But I'm willing to take the girl and give her a chance—at least I'll do it," he corrected himself in his strict observance of truth. "You can see she's not a child to dote on, but I was sorry for her when I sent her mother away and said I'd try and do something for her. The first thing I knew she was at the house, begging me to either take her in or kill her. I couldn't say no, though I wanted to. Now you see what kind of a good Samaritan I am."

"Oh, I know you. You'd hit a man between the eyes if he charged you with doing a good deed. But what does your wife say to adopting such a cherub?"

"We're not going to adopt her or bind ourselves. My wife took the child's part and plead with me in her behalf, though I could see the young one almost made her sick. She thinks it's her duty, you know, and that's enough for her."

"By jocks! Holcroft, she don't feel that way about you, does she?"

"Why shouldn't she?"

"Why should she? I can take about anything from Angy, but it wouldn't do for her to let me see that she disliked me so that I kinder made her sick."

"Oh, thunder, Tom! you're getting a wrong impression. I was never treated better by anybody in my life than by Mrs. Holcroft. She's a lady, every inch of her. But there's no reason why she should dote on an old fellow like me."

"Yes, there is. I have my opinion of a woman who wouldn't dote on a man that's been such a friend as you have."

"Oh, hang it all, Tom! let's talk about business. She's too grateful—that's what worries me. By the way she took hold and filled the house with comfort, she made everything even from the start. She's been as good a friend to me as I to her. She's done all she agreed and more, and I'll never hear a word against her. The point I've been trying to get at is this. If Mrs. Mumpson will agree never to come near us or make trouble in any way, we'll take the child. If she won't so agree, I'll have nothing to do with the girl. I don't want to see her mother, and you'd do me one of the kindest turns you ever did a man by stating the case to her."

"If I do," said Watterly, laughing, "you'll have to forgive me everything in the past and the future."

"I will, Tom, for I'd rather have an eye tooth pulled than face that woman. We're all right—just as we used to be at school, always half quarrelling, yet ready to stand up for each other to the last drop. But I must have her promise in black and white."

"Well, come to my office and we'll try to arrange it. The law is on your side, for the county won't support people that any one will take off its hands. Besides, I'm going to shame the woman's relations into taking her away, and they'll be glad there's one less to support."

They drew up a brief, strong agreement, and Watterly took it to the widow to sign. He found her in great excitement and Jane looking at her defiantly. "I told you he

was the one who enticed away my offspring," she began, almost hysterically. "He's a cold-blooded villain. If there's law in the land I'll—"

"Stop," thundered Watterly. His voice was so high and authoritative that she did stop, and with open mouth stared at the superintendent. "Now, be quiet and listen to me," he continued. "Either you are a sane woman and can stop this foolishness, or else you are insane and must be treated as such. You have your choice. You can't tell me anything about Holcroft; I've known him since he was a boy. He doesn't want your girl. She ran away to him, didn't you?" to Jane, who nodded. "But he's willing to take her, to teach her something and give her a chance. His motive is pure kindness and he has a good wife who'll—"

"I see it all," cried the widow, tragically clasping her hands. "It's his wife's doings. She wishes to triumph over me, and even to usurp my place in ministering to my child. Was there ever such an outrage? Such a bold, vindictive female—"

Here Jane, in a paroxysm of indignant protest, seized her mother and began to shake her so violently that she could not speak.

"Stop that," said Watterly, repressing laughter with difficulty. "I see you are insane and the law will have to step in and take care of you both."

"What will it do with us?" gasped the widow.

"Well, it ought to put you in strait-jackets, to begin with—"

"I've got sense if mother ain't," cried Jane, commencing to sob.

"It's plain the law'll decide your mother's not fit to take care of you. Any one who can even imagine such silly, ridiculous things as she's just said must be looked after. You *may* take a notion, Mrs. Mumpson, that I'm a murderer or a giraffe. It would be just as sensible as your other talk."

"What does Mr. Holcroft offer?" said the widow, cooling off rapidly. If there was an atom of common sense left in

any of his pauper charges, Watterly soon brought it into play, and his vague threatenings of law were always awe-inspiring.

"He makes a very kind offer, that you would jump at if you had sense—a good home for your child. You ought to know she can't stay here and live on charity if any one is willing to take her."

"Of course I would be permitted to visit my child from time to time? He couldn't be so monstrously hard-hearted as—"

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Watterly, impatiently. "The idea of his letting you come to his house after what you've said about him! I've no time to waste in foolishness, or he either. He will let Jane visit you, but you are to sign this paper and keep the agreement not to go near him or make any trouble whatever."

"It's an abominable—"

"Tut! tut! that kind of talk isn't allowed here. If you can't decide like a sane woman the law'll soon decide for you."

As was always the case when Mrs. Mumpson reached the inevitable, she yielded; the paper was signed, and Jane, who had already made up her small bundle, nodded triumphantly to her mother and followed Watterly. Mrs. Mumpson, on tiptoe, followed also, bent on either propitiating Holcroft and so preparing the way for a visit, or else on giving him once more a "piece of her mind."

"All right, Holcroft," said Watterly, as he entered the office, "here's the paper signed. Was there ever such an id—"

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Holcroft," cried the widow, bursting in and rushing forward with extended hand.

The farmer turned away and looked as if made of stone.

Changing her tactics instantly, she put her handkerchief to her eyes and moaned, "You never can have the heart to say I can't come and see my child. I've signed writings, 'tis

true, under threats and compulsions; but I trust there will be relentings—"

"There won't be one relent," cried Jane. "I never want to see you again, and a blind post could see that he doesn't."

"Jane," said Holcroft, sternly, "don't speak so again. If strangers can be kind and patient with you, you can be so with your mother. She has no claims on me and has said things which make it impossible for me to speak to her again, but I shall insist on your visiting and treating her kindly.—Good-by, Watterly. You've proved yourself a friend again," and he went rapidly away, followed by Jane.

Mrs. Mumpson was so taken back by Holcroft's final words and Watterly's stern manner as he said, "This is my office," that for once in her life she disappeared silently.

Holcroft soon purchased the articles on his list, meanwhile racking his brains to think of something that he could buy for Alida, but the fear of being thought sentimental and of appearing to seek a personal regard for himself, not "nominated in the bond," restrained him.

On his way home, he was again sunk in deep abstraction, but the bitterness of his feeling had passed away. Although as mistaken as before in his apprehension of Alida, his thoughts were kinder and juster. "I've no right to find fault or complain," he said to himself. "She's done all I asked and better than she agreed, and there's no one to blame if she can't do more. It must have been plain enough to her at first that I didn't want anything but a housekeeper—a quiet, friendly body that would look after the house and dairy, and she's done better than I even hoped. That's just the trouble; she's turned out so different from what I expected and looks so different from what she did, that I'm just sort of carried away. I'd give half the farm if she was sitting by my side this June evening and I could tell her all I feel and know she was glad. I must be just and fair to her. I asked her to agree to one thing and now I'm beginning to want a tremendous sight more—I want her to like not only her home and work and the quiet life she so longed for, but

I want her to like me, to enjoy my society, not only in a friendly, business-like way, but in another way—yes, confound my slow wits! somewhat as if she was my wife in reality and not merely in name, as I insisted. It's mighty mean business in me, who have been so proud of standing up to my agreements and so exacting of others to do the same. I went away cold and stiff this afternoon because she wasn't silly and sentimental when I was. I'm to her an unpolished, homely, middle-aged man, and yet I sort of scoffed at the self-sacrifice which has led her to be pleasant and companionable in every way that her feelings allowed. I wish I were younger and better looking, so it wouldn't all be a sense of duty and gratitude. Gratitude be hanged! I don't want any more of it. Well, now, James Holcroft, if you're the square man you supposed yourself to be, you'll be just as kind and considerate as you know how, and then you'll leave Alida to the quiet, peaceful life to which she looked forward when she married you. The thing for you to do is to go back to your first ways after you were married and attend to the farm. She doesn't want you hanging around and looking at her as if she was one of her own posies. That's something she wasn't led to expect and it would be mean enough to force it upon her before she shows that she wishes it, and I couldn't complain if she *never* wished it."

During the first hour after Holcroft's departure, Alida had been perplexed and worried, but her intuitions soon led to hopefulness, and the beauty and peace of nature without aided in restoring her serenity. The more minutely she dwelt on Holcroft's words and manner, the more true it seemed that he was learning to take an interest in her that was personal and apart from every other consideration. "If I am gentle, patient and faithful," she thought, "all will come out right. He is so true and straightforward that I need have no fears."

When he returned and greeted her with what seemed his old, friendly, natural manner, and, during a temporary absence of Jane, told her laughingly of the Mumpson episode,

she was almost completely reassured. "Suppose the widow breaks through all restraint and appears as did Jane, what would you do?" he asked.

"Whatever you wished," she replied, smiling.

"In other words, what you thought your duty?"

"I suppose that is what one should try to do."

"I guess you are the one that would succeed in doing it, even to Mrs. Mumpson," he said, turning hastily away and going to his room.

She was puzzled again. "I'm sure I don't dote on self-sacrifice and hard duty any more than he does, but I can't tell him that duty is not hard when it's to him."

Jane was given the room over the kitchen which Mrs. Wiggins had occupied, and the farmhouse soon adopted her into its quiet routine. Holcroft's course continued to cause Alida a dissatisfaction which she could scarcely define. He was as kind as ever he had been and even more considerate; he not only gratified her wishes, but tried to anticipate them, while Jane's complete subserviency proved that she had been spoken to very plainly.

One day she missed her spelling lesson for the third time, and Alida told her that she must learn it thoroughly before going out. The child took the book reluctantly, yet without a word. "That's a good girl," said Alida, wishing to encourage her. "I was afraid at first you wouldn't mind me so readily."

"He told me to; he'd fire me out the window if I didn't mind you."

"Oh, no, I think he's very kind to you."

"Well, he's kind to you, too."

"Yes, he has always been kind to me," said Alida, gently, lingeringly, as if the thought were pleasant to dwell upon.

"Say," said Jane, yielding to her curiosity, "how did you make him so afraid of you when he don't like you? He didn't like mother, but he wasn't afraid of her."

"Why do you think he doesn't like me?" Alida faltered, turning very pale.

"Oh, 'cause he looked once just as he did after mother'd been goin' for—"

"There, be still. You mustn't speak of such things or talk to me about Mr. Holcroft in such a way," and she hastily left the kitchen. When in the solitude of her own room, she gave way to bitter tears. " Is it so plain," she thought, "that even this ignorant child sees it? And the unhappy change began the day she came, too. I can't understand it. We were so happy before; and he seemed to enjoy being near me and talking to me when his work permitted. He used to look into my eyes in a way that made me hope and, indeed, feel almost sure. I receive no more such looks; he seems only trying to do his duty by me as he promised at first, and acts as if it were all duty, a mere matter of conscience. Could he have discovered how I felt, and so is taking this way to remind me that nothing of the kind was in our agreement? Well, I've no reason to complain; I accepted the relation of my own free will, but it's hard, hard indeed for a woman who loves a man with her whole heart and soul—and he her husband—to go on meeting him day after day, yet act as if she were his mere business partner. But I can't help myself, my very nature as well as a sense of his rights prevents me from asking more or even showing that I wish for more. That *would* be asking for it. But can it be true that he is positively learning to dislike me? to shrink from me with that strong repulsion which women feel toward some men? Oh, if that is true, the case is hopeless; it would kill me. Every effort to win him, even the most delicate and unobtrusive, would only drive him further away; the deepest instincts of his soul would lead him to withdraw—to shun me. If this is true, the time may come when, so far from my filling his home with comfort, I shall make him dread to enter it. Oh, oh; my only course is to remember just what I promised and he expected when he married me, and live up to that."

Thus husband and wife reached the same conclusion and were rendered equally unhappy.

CHAPTER XXX

HOLCROFT'S BEST HOPE

WHEN Holcroft came in to dinner that day the view he had adopted was confirmed, yet Alida's manner and appearance began to trouble him. Even to his rather slow perception, she did not seem so happy as she had been. She did not meet his eye with her old frank, friendly, and, as he had almost hoped, affectionate, expression; she seemed merely feverishly anxious to do everything and have all as he wished. Instead of acting with natural ease and saying what was in her mind without premeditation, a conscious effort was visible and an apparent solicitude that he should be satisfied. The inevitable result was that he was more dissatisfied. "She's doing her best for me," he growled, as he went back to his work, "and it begins to look as if it might wear her out in time. Confound it! having everything just so isn't of much account when a man's heart-hungry. I'd rather have had one of her old smiles and gone without my dinner. Well, well, how little a man understands himself or knows the future! The day I married her I was in mortal dread lest she should care for me too much and want to be affectionate and all that; and here I am, discontented and moping because everything has turned out as I then wished. Don't see as I'm to blame, either. She had no business to grow so pretty. Then she looked like a ghost, but now when the color comes into her cheeks, and her blue eyes sparkle, a man would be a stupid clod if he didn't look with all his eyes and feel his heart a-thumping. That she should change so wasn't in the bargain; neither was

it that she should read aloud in such sweet tones that a fellow'd like to listen to the dictionary; nor that she should make the house and yard look as they never did before, and, strangest of all, open my eyes to the fact that apple-trees bear flowers as well as pippins. I can't even go by a wild posy in the lane without thinking she'd like it and see in it a sight more than I once could. I've been taken in, as old Jonathan feared," he muttered, following out his fancy with a sort of grim humor. "She isn't the woman I thought I was marrying, at all, and I ain't bound by my agreement—not in my thoughts, anyhow. I'd have been in a nice scrape if I'd taken my little affidavit not to think of her or look upon her in any other light than that of housekeeper and butter-maker. It's a scary thing, this getting married with a single eye to business. See where I am now. Hanged if I don't believe I'm in love with my wife, and, like a thundering fool, I had to warn her against falling in love with me! Little need of that, though. She hasn't been taken in, for I'm the same old chap she married, and I'd be a mighty mean cuss if I went to her and said, 'Here, I want you to do twice as much, a hundred fold as much as you agreed to.' I'd be a fool, too, for she couldn't do it unless something drew her toward me just as I'm drawn toward her."

Late in the afternoon, he leaned on the handle of his corn-plow, and in the consciousness of solitude said aloud, "Things grow clear if you think of them enough, and the Lord knows I don't think of much else any more. It isn't her good qualities which I say over to myself a hundred times a day, or her education, or anything of the kind that draws me; it's she herself. I like her. Why don't I say love her, and be honest? Well, it's a fact, and I've got to face it. Here I am, plowing out my corn, and it looks splendid for its age. I thought if I could stay on the old place, and plant and cultivate and reap, I'd be more than content, and now I don't seem to care a rap for the corn or the farm either, compared with Alida; and I care for her just because she is Alida and no one else. But the other side of

this fact has an ugly look. Suppose I'm disagreeable to her. When she married me she felt like a woman drowning; she was ready to take hold of the first hand reached to her, without knowing much about whose hand it was. Well, she's had time to find out. She isn't drawn. Perhaps she feels toward me somewhat as I did toward Mrs. Mumpson, and she can't help herself either. Well, well, the bare thought of it makes my heart lead. What's a man to do? What can I do but live up to my agreement and not torment her any more than I can help with my company? That's the only honest course. Perhaps she'll get more used to me in time. She might get sick, and then I'd be so kind and watchful that she'd think the old fellow wasn't so bad after all. But I shan't give her the comfort of no end of self-sacrifice in trying to be pleasant and sociable. If she's foolish enough to think she's in my debt, she can't pay it in that way. No, sir! I've got to make the best of it now—I'm bound to—but this business marriage will never suit me until that white arm I saw in the dairy room is around my neck, and she looks in my eyes and says, 'James, I guess I'm ready for a longer marriage ceremony.'"

It was a pity that Alida could not have been among the hazel-nut bushes near and heard him.

He resumed his toil, working late and doggedly. At supper he was very attentive to Alida, but taciturn and preoccupied; and when the meal was over he lighted his pipe and strolled out into the moonlight. She longed to follow him, yet felt it to be more impossible than if she were chained to the floor.

And so the days passed, Holcroft striving with the whole force of his will to appear absorbed in the farm, and she with equal effort to seem occupied and contented with her household and dairy duties. They did everything for each other that they could, and yet each thought that the other was acting from a sense of obligation, and so all the more sedulously veiled their actual thoughts and feelings from each

other. Of course, such mistaken effort only led to a more complete misunderstanding.

With people of their simplicity and habit of reticence, little of what was in their hearts appeared on the surface. Neither had time to mope, and their mutual duties were in a large measure a support and refuge. Of these they could still speak freely, for they pertained to business. Alida's devotion to her work was unfeigned, for it seemed now her only avenue of approach to her husband. She watched over the many broods of little chickens with tireless vigilance. If it were yellow gold, she could not have gathered the butter from the churn with greater greed. She kept the house immaculate and sought to develop her cooking into a fine art. She was scrupulous in giving Jane her lessons and in trying to correct her vernacular and manners, but the presence of the child grew to be a heavier cross every day. She could not blame the girl whose misfortune it was to lead incidentally to the change in Holcroft's manner, yet it was impossible not to associate her with the beginning of that change. Jane was making decided improvement, and had Alida been happy and at rest this fact would have given much satisfaction in spite of the instinctive repugnance which the girl seemed to inspire universally. Holcroft recognized this repugnance and the patient effort to disguise it and be kind.

"Like enough she feels in the same way toward me," he thought, "and is trying a sight harder not to show it. But she seems willing enough to talk business and to keep up her interest in the partnership. Well, blamed if I wouldn't rather talk business to her than love to any other woman!"

So it gradually came about that they had more and more to say to each other on matters relating to the farm. Holcroft showed her the receipts from the dairy, and her eyes sparkled as if he had brought jewels home to her. Then she in her turn would expatiate on the poultry interests and assure him that there were already nearly two hundred little chicks on the place. One afternoon, during a shower, she ventured to beguile him into listening to the greater part of

one of the agricultural journals, and with much deference made two or three suggestions about the farm which he saw were excellent. She little dreamed that if she were willing to talk of turning the farm upside down and inside out, he would have listened with pleasure.

They both began to acquire more serenity and hopefulness, for even this sordid business partnership was growing strangely interesting. The meals grew less and less silent, and the farmer would smoke his pipe invitingly near in the evening, so that she could resume their talk on bucolic subjects without much conscious effort, while at the same time if she did not wish his society she could shun it without discourtesy. He soon perceived that she needed some encouragement to talk even of farm matters, but having received it that she showed no further reluctance. He naturally began to console himself with business as unstintedly as he dared. "As long as I keep on this tack all seems well," he muttered. "She don't act as if I was disagreeable to her, but then, how can a man tell? If she thinks it her duty, she'll talk and smile, yet shiver at the very thought of my touching her. Well, well, time will show. We seem to be getting more sociable, anyhow."

They both recognized this fact and tried to disguise it and to relieve themselves from the appearance of making any undue advances by greater formality of address. In Jane's presence, he had formed the habit of speaking to his wife as Mrs. Holcroft, and now he was invariably "Mr."

One evening, in the latter part of June, he remarked at supper, "I must give half a day to hoeing the garden tomorrow. I've been so busy working out the corn and potatoes that it seems an age since I've been in the garden."

"She and me," began Jane, "I mean Mrs. Holcroft and I, have been in the garden."

"That's right, Jane, you're coming on. I think your improved talk and manners do Mrs. Holcroft much credit. I'd like to take some lessons myself." Then, as if a little

alarmed at his words, he hastened to ask, "What have you been doing in the garden?"

"You'll see when you go there," replied Jane, her small eyes twinkling with the rudiments of fun.

Holcroft looked at the child as if he had not seen her for some time either. Her hair was neatly combed, braided and tied with a blue ribbon instead of a string, her gown was as becoming as any dress could be to her, her little brown hands were clean, and they no longer managed the knife and fork in an ill-bred manner. The very expression of the child's face was changing, and now that it was lighted up with mirth at the little surprise awaiting him, it had at least attained the negative grace of being no longer repulsive. He sighed involuntarily as he turned away. "Just see what she's doing for that child that I once thought hideous! How much she might do for me if she cared as I do!"

He rose from the table, lighted his pipe and went out to the doorstep. Alida looked at him wistfully. "He stood there with me once and faced a mob of men," she thought. "Then he put his arm around me. I would face almost any danger for even such a caress again." The memory of that hour lent her unwonted courage, and she approached him timidly and said, "Perhaps you would like to go and look at the garden? Jane and I may not have done everything right."

"Why, certainly. I forgot about the garden; but then you'll have to go with me if I'm to tell you."

"I don't mind," she said, leading the way.

The June sun was low in the west, and the air had become deliciously cool and fragrant. The old rose bushes were in bloom, and as she passed she picked a bud and fastened it on her bosom. Woodthrushes, orioles, and the whole chorus of birds were in full song; limpid rills of melody from the meadow larks flowed from the fields, and the whistling of the quails added to the harmony.

Holcroft was in a mood of which he had never been conscious before. These familiar sounds, which had been un-

heeded so much of his life, now affected him strangely, creating an immeasurable sadness and longing. It seemed as if perceptions which were like new senses were awakening in his mind. The world was full of wonderful beauty before unrecognized, and the woman who walked lightly and gracefully at his side was the crown of it all. He himself was so old, plain and unworthy in contrast. His heart ached with a positive, definite pain that he was not younger, handsomer and better equipped to win the love of his wife. As she stood in the garden, wearing the rose, her neat dress outlining her graceful form, the level rays of the sun lighting up her face and turning her hair to gold, he felt that he had never seen or imagined such a woman before. She was in harmony with the June evening and a part of it, while he, in his working clothes, his rugged, sun-browned features and hair tinged with gray, was a blot upon the scene. She, who was so lovely, must be conscious of his rude, clownish appearance. He would have faced any man living and held his own on the simple basis of his manhood. Anything like scorn, although veiled, on Alida's part, would have touched his pride and steeled his will, but the words and manner of this gentle woman who tried to act as if blind to all that he was in contrast with herself, to show him deference, kindness and goodwill when perhaps she felt toward him somewhat as she did toward Jane, overwhelmed him with humility and grief. It is the essence of deep, unselfish love to depreciate itself and exalt its object. There was a superiority in Alida which Holcroft was learning to recognize more clearly every day, and he had not a trace of vanity to sustain him. Now he was in a mood to wrong and undervalue himself without limit.

She showed him how much she and Jane had accomplished, how neat and clean they had kept the rows of growing vegetables and how good the promise was for an indefinite number of dinners, but she only added to the farmer's depression. He was in no mood for onions, parsnips and their vegetable kin, yet thought, "She thinks I'm only capa-

ble of being interested in such things and I've been at much pains to give that impression. She picked that rose for *herself* and now she's showing *me* how soon we may hope to have summer cabbage and squash. She thus shows that she knows the difference between us, and that always must be between us, I fear. She is so near in our daily life, yet how can I ever get any nearer? As I feel now, it seems impossible."

She had quickly observed his depressed, abstracted manner, but misinterpreted the causes. Her own face clouded and grew troubled. Perhaps she was revealing too much of her heart, although seeking to disguise it so sedulously, and he was penetrating her motives for doing so much in the garden and in luring him thither now. He was not showing much practical interest in beans and beets, and was evidently oppressed and ill at ease.

"I hope we have done things right?" she ventured, turning away to hide tears of disappointment.

"Her self-sacrifice is giving out," he thought, bitterly. "She finds she can scarcely look at me as I now appear in contrast with this June evening. Well, I don't blame her. It makes me almost sick when I think of myself, and I won't be brute enough to say a harsh word to her.—You have done it all far better than I could," he said, emphatically. "I would not have believed it if you hadn't shown me. The trouble is, you are trying to do too much. I—I think I'll take a walk."

In fact, he had reached the limit of endurance; he could not look upon her another moment as she appeared that evening and feel that she associated him chiefly with crops and business, and that all her grateful goodwill could not prevent his personality from being disagreeable. He must carry his bitterness whither no eye could see him, and as he turned, his self-disgust led him to whirl away his pipe. It struck a tree and fell shattered at its foot. Alida had never seen him do anything of the kind before, and it indicated that he was passing beyond the limits of patience. "Oh, oh," she sobbed,

"I fear we are going to drift apart! If he can't endure to talk with me about such things, what chance have I at all? I hoped that the hour, the beauty of the evening and the evidence that I had been trying so hard to please him would make him more like what he used to be before he seemed to take a dislike. There's only one way to account for it all—he sees how I feel and he don't like it. My very love sets him against me. My heart was overflowing to-night. How could I help it, as I remembered how he stood up for me? He was brave and kind; he meant well by me, he means well now; but he can't help his feelings. He has gone away now to think of the woman that he did love and loves still, and it angers him that I should think of taking her place. He loved her as a child and girl and woman—he told me so; he warned me and said he could not help thinking of her. If I had not learned to love him so deeply and passionately, and show it in spite of myself, time would gradually have softened the past and all might have gone well. Yet how could I help it when he saved me from so much? I feel to-night, though, that I only escaped one kind of trouble to meet another almost as bad and which may become worse."

She strolled to the further end of the garden that she might become calm before meeting Jane's scrutiny. Useless precaution, for the girl had been watching them both. Her motive had not been unmixed curiosity, since having taken some part in the garden work, she had wished to witness Holcroft's pleasure and hear his praises. Since the actors in the scene so misunderstood each other, she certainly would not rightly interpret them. "She's losin' her hold on 'im," she thought. "He acted just as if she was mother."

When Jane saw Alida coming toward the house she whisked from the concealing shrubbery to the kitchen again, and was stolidly washing the dishes when her mistress entered. "You are slow to-night," said Alida, looking at the child keenly, but the impassive face revealed nothing. She set about helping the girl, feeling it would be a relief to keep her hands busy.

Jane's efforts to comfort were always maladroit, yet the apparent situation so interested her that she yielded to her inclination to talk. "Say," she began—and Alida was too dejected and weary to correct the child's vernacular—"Mr. Holcroft's got somethin' on his mind."

"Well, that's not strange."

"No, s'pose not. Hate to see 'im look so, though. He always used to look so when mother went for 'im and hung around 'im. At last he cleared mother out, and just before he looked as black as he did when he passed the house while ago. You're good to me an' I'd like you to stay. 'Fi's you I'd leave 'im alone."

"Jane," said Alida, coldly, "I don't wish you ever to speak to me of such things again," and she hastily left the room.

"Oh, well," muttered Jane, "I've got eyes in my head. If you're goin' to be foolish, like mother, and keep a-goin' for 'im, it's your lookout. I kin get along with him and he with me, and *I'm* goin' to stay."

Holcroft strode rapidly up the lane to the deep solitude at the edge of his woodland. Beneath him lay the farm and the home that he had married to keep, yet now, without a second's hesitation, he would part with all to call his wife *wife*. How little the name now satisfied him, without the sweet realities of which the word is significant! The term and relation had become a mocking mirage. He almost cursed himself that he had exulted over his increasing bank account and general prosperity, and had complacently assured himself that she was doing just what he had asked, without any sentimental nonsense. "How could I expect it to turn out otherwise?" he thought. "From the first I made her think I hadn't a soul for anything but crops and money. Now that she's getting over her trouble and away from it, she's more able to see just what I am, or at least what she naturally thinks I am. But she doesn't understand me—I scarcely understand myself. I long to be a different man in every way, and not to work and live like an ox. Here are

some of my crops almost ready to gather and they never were better, yet I've no heart for the work. Seems to me it'll wear me out if I have to carry this load of trouble all the time. I thought my old burdens hard to bear; I thought I was lonely before, but it was nothing compared with living near one you love, but from whom you are cut off by something you can't see, yet must feel to the bottom of your heart."

His distraught eyes rested on the church spire, fading in the twilight, and the little adjoining graveyard. "Oh, Bessie," he groaned, "why did you die? I was good enough for *you*. Oh, that all had gone on as it was and I had never known—"

He stopped, shook his head and was silent. At last he sighed, "I *did* love Bessie, I love and respect her memory as much as ever. But somehow I never felt as I do now. All was quiet and matter-of-fact in those days, yet it was real and satisfying. I was content to live on, one day like another, to the end of my days. If I hadn't been so content it would be better for me now. I'd have a better chance if I had read more, thought more and fitted myself to be more of a companion for a woman like Alida. If I knew a great deal and could talk well she might forget I'm old and homely. Bessie was so true a friend that she would wish, if she knows, what *I* wish. I thought I needed a housekeeper; I find I need more than all else such a wife as Alida could be—one that could help me to be a man instead of a drudge, a Christian instead of a discontented and uneasy unbeliever. At one time, it seemed that she was leading me along so naturally and pleasantly that I never was so happy, then all at once it came to me that she was doing it from gratitude and a sense of duty, and the duty grows harder for her every day. Well, there seems nothing for it now but to go on as we began, and hope that the future will bring us more in sympathy."

CHAPTER XXXI

"NEVER!"

FOR the next two or three days Jane had no occasion to observe that Alida was in the least degree obtrusive in her attention to the farmer. She was assiduous in her work and more diligent than ever in her conscious efforts to do what she thought he wished; but she was growing pale, constrained and silent. She struggled heroically to appear as at first, but without much success, for she could not rally from the wound he had given her so unintentionally and which Jane's words had deepened. She almost loathed herself under her association with Mrs. Mumpson, and her morbid thoughts had hit upon a worse reason for Holcroft's apparent repulsion. As she questioned everything in the sleepless hours that followed the interview in the garden, she came to the miserable conclusion that he had discovered her love, and that by suggestion, natural to his mind, it reminded him of her pitiful story. He could be sorry for her and be kind; he could even be her honest friend and protector as a wronged and unhappy woman, but he could not love one with a history like hers and did not wish her to love him. This seemed an adequate explanation of the change in their relations, but she felt that it was one under which her life would wither and her heart break. This promised to be worse than what she had dreaded at the almshouse—the facing the world alone and working till she died among strangers. The fact that they were strangers would enable her to see their averted faces with comparative indifference, but that the man to whom she had yielded her whole heart should turn away was

intolerable. She felt that he could not do this willingly, but only under the imperious instincts of his nature—that he was virtually helpless in the matter. There was an element in these thoughts which stung her woman's soul, and, as we have said, she could not rally.

Holcroft never suspected her morbid thoughts, and his loyal, loving heart was incapable of dreaming of them. He only grew more unhappy as he saw the changes in her, for he regarded himself as the cause. Yet he was perplexed and unable to account for her rapidly increasing pallor while he continued so kind, considerate and especially so unobtrusive. He assuredly thought he was showing a disposition to give her all the time she wished to become reconciled to her lot. "Thunder!" he said to himself, "we can't grow old together without getting used to each other."

On Saturday noon, at dinner, he remarked, "I shall have to begin haying on Monday and so I'll take everything to town this afternoon, for I won't be able to go again for some days. Is there anything you'd like me to get, Mrs. Holcroft?"

She shook her head. "I don't need anything," she replied. He looked at her downcast face with troubled eyes and shivered. "She looks as if she were going to be sick," he thought. "Good Lord! I feel as if there was nothing but trouble ahead. Every mouthful I take seems to choke me."

A little later he pushed away almost untasted a piece of delicious cherry pie, the first of the season. Alida could scarcely keep the tears back as she thought, "There was a time when he would have praised it without stint. I took so much pains with it in the hope he'd notice, for he once said he was very fond of it." Such were the straws that were indicating the deep, dark currents.

As he rose, she said almost apathetically in her dejection, "Mr. Holcroft, Jane and I picked a basket of the early cherries. You may as well sell them, for there are plenty left on the tree for use."

"That was too much for you to do in the hot sun. Well,

I'll sell 'em and add what they bring to your egg money in the bank. You'll get rich," he continued, trying to smile, "if you don't spend more."

"I don't wish to spend anything," she said, turning away with the thought, "How can he think I want finery when my heart is breaking?"

Holcroft drove away looking and feeling as if he were going to a funeral. At last he broke out, "I can't stand this another day. To-morrow's Sunday, and I'll manage to send Jane somewhere or take Alida out to walk and tell her the whole truth. She shall be made to see that I can't help myself and that I'm willing to do anything she wishes. She's married to me and has got to make the best of it, and I'm sure I'm willing to make it as easy as I can."

Jane was a little perplexed at the condition of affairs. Mrs. Holcroft had left her husband alone as far as possible, as she had advised, but apparently it had not helped matters much. But she believed that the trouble she had witnessed boded her no ill and so was inclined to regard it philosophically. "He looks almost as glum when he's goin' round alone, as if he'd married mother. She talked too much and that didn't please him; this one talks less and less, and he don't seem pleased, nuther, but it seems to me he's very foolish to be so fault-findin' when she does everything for him top notch. I never lived so well in my life, nor he, nuther, I believe. He must be in a bad way when he couldn't eat that cherry pie."

Alida was so weary and felt so ill that she went to the parlor and lay down upon the lounge. "My heart feels as if it were bleeding slowly away," she murmured. "If I'm going to be sick the best thing I can do is to die and end it all," and she gave way to that deep dejection in which there seems no remedy for trouble.

The hours dragged slowly by; Jane finished her household tasks very leisurely, then, taking a basket, went out to the garden to pick some early peas. While thus engaged, she saw a man coming up the lane. His manner instantly

riveted her attention and awakened her curiosity, and she crouched lower behind the pea-vines for concealment. All her furtive, watchful instincts were awake, and her conscience was clear, too, for certainly she had a right to spy upon a stranger.

The man seemed almost as furtive as herself; his eyes were everywhere and his step slow and hesitating. Instead of going directly to the house, he cautiously entered the barn and she heard him a little later call Mr. Holcroft. Of course, there was no answer, and, as if assured, he approached the house, looking here and there on every side, seemingly to see if any one was about. Jane had associated with men and boys too long to have any childlike timidity, and she also had just confidence in her skulking and running powers. "After all, he don't want nothin' of me and won't hurt me," she reasoned. "He acts mighty queer though, and I'm goin' to hear what he says."

The moment he passed the angle of the house she dodged around to its rear and stole into the dairy room, being well aware that from this position she could overhear words spoken in ordinary conversational tones in the apartment above. She had barely gained her ambush when she heard Alida half shriek, "Henry Ferguson!"

It was indeed the man who had deceived her that had stolen upon her solitude. His somewhat stealthy approach had been due to the wish and expectation of finding her alone, and he had about convinced himself that she was so by exploring the barn and observing the absence of the horses and wagon. Cunning and unscrupulous, it was his plan to appear before the woman who had thought herself his wife, without any warning whatever, believing that in the tumult of her surprise and shock she would be off her guard and that her old affection would reassert itself. He passed through the kitchen to the parlor door. Alida, in her deep, painful abstraction, did not hear him until he stood in the doorway, and, with outstretched arms, breathed her name. Then, as if struck a blow, she had sprung to her feet, half shrieked his

name and stood panting, regarding him as if he were a spectre.

"Your surprise is natural, Alida dear," he said gently, "but I've a right to come to you, for my wife is dead," and he advanced toward her.

"Stand back!" she cried sternly; "you've no right and never can have."

"Oh, yes, I have," he replied in a wheedling tone. "Come, come, your nerves are shaken. Sit down, for I've much to tell you."

"No, I won't sit down, and I tell you to leave me instantly. You've no right here and I no right to listen to you."

"I can soon prove that you have a better right to listen to me than to any one else. Were we not married by a minister?"

"Yes, but that made no difference. You deceived both him and me."

"It made no difference, perhaps, in the eye of the law, while that woman you saw was living, but she's dead, as I can easily prove. How were you married to this man Holcroft?"

Alida grew dizzy; everything whirled and grew black before her eyes as she sank into a chair. He came to her and took her hand, but his touch was a most effectual restorative. She threw his hand away and said hoarsely, "Do you —do you mean that you have any claim on me?"

"Who has a better claim?" he asked cunningly. "I loved you when I married you and I love you now. Do you think I rested a moment after I was free from the woman I detested? No, indeed; nor did I rest till I found out who took you from the almshouse to be his household drudge, not wife. I've seen the justice who aided in the wedding farce and learned how this man Holcroft made him cut down even the ceremony of a civil marriage to one sentence. It was positively heathenish, and he only took you because he couldn't get a decent servant to live with him."

"Oh, God!" murmured the stricken woman. "Can such a horrible thing be?"

"So it seems," he resumed, misinterpreting her. "Come now," he said confidently, and sitting down, "don't look so broken up about it. Even while that woman was living I felt that I was married to you and you only; now that I'm free—"

"But I'm not free and don't wish to be."

"Don't be foolish, Alida. You know this farmer don't care a rap for you. Own up now, does he?"

The answer was a low, half-despairing cry.

"There, I knew it was so. What else could you expect? Don't you see I'm your true refuge and not this hard-hearted, money-grasping farmer?"

"Stop speaking against him," she cried. "Oh, God," she wailed, "can the law give this man any claim on me, now that his wife is dead?"

"Yes, and one I mean to enforce," he replied, doggedly.

"I don't believe she's dead, I don't believe anything you say. You deceived me once."

"I'm not deceiving you now, Alida," he said with much solemnity. "She *is* dead. If you were calmer, I have proofs to convince you in these papers. Here's the newspaper, too, containing the notice of her death," and he handed it to her.

She read it with her frightened eyes and then the paper dropped from her half paralyzed hands to the floor. She was so unsophisticated and her brain was in such a whirl of confusion and terror that she was led to believe at the moment that he had a legal claim upon her which he could enforce.

"Oh that Mr. Holcroft were here!" she cried desperately. "He wouldn't deceive me; he never deceived me."

"It is well for him that he isn't here," said Ferguson, assuming a dark look.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Come, come, Alida," he said, smiling reassuringly. "You are frightened and nervous and I don't wish to make you any more so. You know how I would naturally regard

the man who I feel has my wife; but let us forget about him. Listen to my plan. All I ask of you is to go with me to some distant place where neither of us are known, and—"

"Never," she interrupted.

"Don't say that," he replied, coolly. "Do you think I'm a man to be trifled with after what I've been through?"

"You can't compel me to go against my will," and there was an accent of terror in her words which made them a question.

He saw his vantage more clearly and said quietly, "I don't want to compel you if it can be helped. You know how true I was to you—"

"No, no, you deceived me. I won't believe you now."

"You may have to. At any rate, you know how fond I was of you, and I tell you plainly, I won't give you up now. This man doesn't love you, nor do you love him—"

"I *do* love him, I'd die for him. There now, you know the truth. You wouldn't compel a woman to follow you who shrinks from you in horror, even if you had the right. Although the ceremony was brief it *was* a ceremony, and he was not married then as you were when you deceived me. He has ever been truth itself, and I won't believe you have any rights till he tells me so himself."

"So you shrink from me with horror, do you?" asked Ferguson, rising, his face growing black with passion.

"Yes, I do. Now leave me and let me never see you again."

"And you are going to ask this stupid old farmer about my rights?"

"Yes, I'll take proof of them from no other, and even if he confirmed your words I'd never live with you again. I would live alone till I died."

"That's all very foolish high tragedy, but if you're not careful there may be some real tragedy. If you care for this Holcroft, as you say, you had better go quietly away with me."

"What do you mean?" she faltered, tremblingly.

"I mean I'm a desperate man whom the world has wronged too much already. You know the old saying, 'Beware of the quiet man.' You know how quiet, contented and happy I was with you, and so I would be again to the end of my days. You are the only one who can save me from becoming a criminal, a vagabond, for with you only have I known happiness. Why should I live or care to live? If this farmer-clod keeps you from me, woe betide him! My one object in living will be his destruction. I shall hate him only as a man robbed as I am can hate."

"What would you do?" she could only ask in a horrified whisper.

"I can only tell you that he'd never be safe a moment. I'm not afraid of him. You see I'm armed," and he showed her a revolver. "He can't quietly keep from me what I feel is my own."

"Merciful Heaven! this is terrible," she gasped.

"Of course it's terrible. I mean it to be so. You can't order me off as if I were a tramp. Your best course for his safety is to go quietly with me at once. I have a carriage waiting near at hand."

"No, no, I'd rather die than do that, and though he cannot feel as I do, I believe he'd rather die than have me do it."

"Oh, well, if you think he's so ready to die—"

"No, I don't mean that. Kill me. I want to die."

"Why should I kill you?" he asked, with a contemptuous laugh. "That wouldn't do me a particle of good. It will be your own fault if any one is hurt."

"Was ever a woman put in such a cruel position!"

"Oh, yes, many and many a time. As a rule, though, they are too sensible and kind-hearted to make so much trouble."

"If you have legal rights, why don't you quietly enforce them instead of threatening?"

For a moment he was confused and then said, recklessly,

"It would come to the same thing in the end. Holcroft would never give you up."

"He'd have to. I wouldn't stay here a moment if I had no right."

"But you said you would not live with me again?"

"Nor would I. I'd go back to the poorhouse and die there, for do you think I could live after another such experience? But my mind has grown clearer. You are deceiving me again, and Mr. Holcroft is incapable of deceiving me. He would never have called me his wife unless I was his wife, before God and man."

"I'm not deceiving you in regard to one thing," he said, tragically.

"Oh, God, what shall I do?"

"If you won't go with me you must leave him," he replied, believing that if this step were taken others would follow.

"If I leave him—if I go away and live alone, will you promise to do him no harm?"

"I'd have no motive to harm him then, which will be better security than a promise. At the same time I do promise."

"And you will also promise to leave me utterly alone?"

"If I can."

"You must promise never even to tempt me to think of going away. I'd rather you'd shoot me than ask it. I'm not a weak, timid girl. I'm a broken-hearted woman who fears some things far more than death."

"If you have any fears for Holcroft they are very rational ones."

"It is for his sake that I would act. I would rather suffer anything and lose everything than have harm come to him."

"All I can say is that if you will leave him completely and finally I will let him alone. But you must do it promptly. Everything depends upon this. I'm in too reckless and bitter a mood to be trifled with. Besides, I've plenty

of money and could escape from the country in twenty-four hours. You needn't think you can tell this story to Holcroft and that he can protect you and himself. I'm here under an assumed name and have seen no one who knows me. I may have to disappear for a time and be disguised when I come again, but I pledge you my word he'll never be safe as long as you are under his roof."

"Then I will sacrifice myself for him," she said, pallid even to her lips. "I will go away. But never dream that you can come near me again—you who deceived and wronged me, and now, far worse, threaten the man I love."

"We'll see about that," he replied, cynically. "At any rate, you will have left him."

"Go," she said, imperiously.

"I'll take a kiss first, sweetheart," he said, advancing with a sardonic smile.

"Jane!" she shrieked. He paused, and she saw evidences of alarm.

The girl ran lightly out of the dairy room where she had been a greedy listener to all that had been said, and a moment later appeared in the yard before the house. "Yes'm," she answered.

"Be careful now, sir," said Alida, sternly. "There's a witness."

"Only a little idiotic-looking girl."

"She's not idiotic, and if you touch me the compact's broken."

"Very well, my time will come. Remember, you've been warned," and he pulled his hat over his eyes and strode away.

"Bah!" said Jane, with a snicker, "as if I hadn't seen his ugly mug so I'd know it 'mong a thousand."

With a face full of loathing and dread Alida watched her enemy disappear down the lane, and then, half fainting, sank on the lounge.

"Jane," she called feebly, but there was no answer.

CHAPTER XXXII

JANE PLAYS MOUSE TO THE LION

IT can be well understood that Jane had no disposition to return to Mrs. Holcroft and the humdrum duties of the house. There opened before her an exciting line of action which fully accorded with her nature, and she entered upon it at once. Her first impulse was to follow the man of whom she had learned so much. Not only was she spurred to this course by her curiosity, but also by her instinctive loyalty to Holcroft, and, it must be admitted, by her own interests. Poor little Jane had been nurtured in a hard school and had by this time learned the necessity of looking out for herself. This truth, united with her shrewd, matter-of-fact mind, led her to do the most sensible thing under the circumstances. "I know a lot now that he'll be glad to know, and if I tell him everything he'll keep me always. The first thing he'll want to know is what's become of that threatenin' scamp," and she followed Ferguson with the stealth of an Indian.

Ferguson was not only a scamp, but, like most of his class, a coward. He had been bitterly disappointed in his interview with Alida. As far as his selfish nature permitted, he had a genuine affection for her, and he had thought of little else besides her evident fondness for him. He was so devoid of moral principle that he could not comprehend a nature like hers, and had scarcely believed it possible that she would repulse him so inflexibly. She had always been so gentle, yielding and subservient to his wishes that he had thought that, having been assured of his wife's death, a little persuasion and perhaps a few threats would

induce her to follow him, for he could not imagine her becoming attached to such a man as Holcroft had been described to be. Her uncompromising principle had entered but slightly into his calculations, and so under the spur of anger and selfishness he had easily entered upon a game of bluff. He knew well enough that he had no claim upon Alida, yet it was in harmony with his false heart to try to make her think so. He had no serious intention of harming Holcroft —he would be afraid to attempt this—but if he could so work on Alida's fears as to induce her to leave her husband he believed that the future would be full of possibilities. At any rate, he would find his revenge in making Alida and Holcroft all the trouble possible. Even in the excitement of the interview, however, he realized that he was playing a dangerous game, and when Jane answered so readily to Alida's call he was not a little disturbed. Satisfied that he had accomplished all that he could hope for at present, his purpose now was to get back to town unobserved and await developments. He therefore walked rapidly down the lane and pursued the road for a short distance until he came to an old, disused lane leading up the hillside into a grove where he had concealed a horse and buggy. Unless there should be necessity, it was his intention to remain in his hiding-place until after nightfall.

Jane had merely to skirt the bushy hillside higher up, in order to keep Ferguson in view and discover the spot in which he was lurking. Instead of returning to the house, she kept right on, maintaining a sharp eye on the road beneath to make sure that Holcroft did not pass unobserved. By an extended detour, she reached the highway and continued toward town in the hope of meeting the farmer. At last she saw him driving rapidly homeward. He was consumed with anxiety to be at least near to Alida, even if, as he believed, he was no longer welcome in her presence. When Jane stepped out into the road he pulled up his horses and stared at her. She, almost bursting with her great secrets, put her finger on her lips and nodded portentously.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, his heart beating quickly.

"I've got a lot to tell yer, but don't want no one to see us."

"About my wife?"

The girl nodded.

"Good God! speak then. Is she sick?" and he sprung out and caught her arm with a grip that hurt her.

"Please, sir, I'm doin' all I kin for yer and—and you hurt me."

Holcroft saw the tears coming to her eyes and he released his hold as he said, "Forgive me, Jane, I didn't mean to; but for mercy's sake, tell me your story."

"It's a long 'un."

"Well, well, give me the gist of it in a word."

"I guess she's goin' to run away."

Holcroft groaned and almost staggered to his horses' heads, then led them to the roadside and tied them to a tree. Sitting down, as if too weak to stand, he buried his face in his hands. He could not bear to have Jane see his distress. "Tell your story," he said hoarsely, "quick, for I may have to act quickly."

"Guess yer will. Did yer know she was married?"

"Certainly—to me."

"No, to another man—married by a minister. He's been there with her." She little foresaw the effect of her words, for the farmer bounded to his feet with an oath and sprang to his horses.

"Stop," cried Jane, tugging at his arm. "If you go rushin' home now, you'll show you've got no more sense than mother. You'll spoil everything. She ain't goin' to run away with *him*—she said she wouldn't, though he coaxed and threatened to kill yer if she didn't. 'Fi's a man I wouldn't act like a mad bull. I'd find out how to get ahead of t'other man."

"Well," said Holcroft, in a voice that frightened the child, "she said she wouldn't run away with this scoundrel —of course not—but you say she's going to leave. She'll

meet him somewhere—good God!—but how should you understand? Come, let me get home."

"I understand a sight more'n you do and you go on so that I can't tell you anything. If you showed sense you'd be glad I was lookin' out for you so I could tell you everything. What's the good of goin' rampagin' home when, if you'd only listen, you could get even with that scoundrel, as yer call 'im, and make all right," and Jane began to cry.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed the chafing man, "tell me your story at once or you'll drive me mad. You don't half know what you're talking about or how much your words mean—how should you? The thing to do is to get home as soon as possible."

"You ain't no reason to be so mad and glum all the while," cried Jane, smarting under a sense of injustice. "Here I'm a-tryin' to do for you, and you'll be sorry ernuff if you don't stop and listen. And she's been a-tryin' to do for you all along and she's been standin' up for you this afternoon and is goin' to run away to save your life."

"Run away to save my life? Are you crazy?"

"No, but you be," cried the girl, excited and exasperated beyond restraint. "If she *is* your wife I'd stand up for her and take care of her since she stands up for you so. 'Stead of that, you go round as glum as a thundercloud, and now want to go ragin' home to her. Dunno whether she's your wife or not, but I *do* know she said she loved you and 'ud die for you, and she wouldn't do a thing that man asked but go away to save your life."

Holcroft looked at the girl as if dazed. "Said she *loved* me?" he repeated slowly.

"Of course. You knowed that all 'long—anybody could see it—an' you don't treat her much better'n you did mother." Then, with an impatient gesture, she asked, "Will you sit down and listen?"

"No, I won't," he cried, springing toward his horses, "I'll find out if your words are true."

"Oh, yes," said Jane, contemptuously, "run right to her

to find out somethin' as plain as the nose on her face, and run right by the man that was threatenin' her and you too."

Wheeling round, he asked, "Where is he?"

"I know, but I won't say 'nuther word till you stop goin' on. 'Fi's a man I'd find out what to do 'fore I did anythin'."

Jane had little comprehension of the tempest she had raised in Holcroft's soul or its causes, and so was in no mood to make allowances for him. By this time, the first gust of his passion was passing and reason resuming its sway. He paced up and down in the road a moment or two, and then sat down as he said, "I don't half understand what you've been talking about and I fear you don't. You've evidently been listening and watching and have got hold of something. Now, I'll be as patient as I can if you'll tell me the whole story quickly," and he turned his flushed, quivering face toward her.

"Then I s'pose you'll scold me for listenin' and watchin' that scamp," said the girl, sullenly.

"No, Jane, not in this case. Unless your impressions are all mistaken I may have to thank you all my life. I'm not one to forget those who are true to me. Now, begin at the beginning and go right through to the end; then I may understand better than you can."

Jane did as she was told, and many "says he's" and "says she's" followed in her literal narrative. Holcroft again dropped his face into his hands and before she was through tears of joy trickled through his fingers. When she finished he rose, turned away, and hastily wiped his eyes, then gave the girl his hand as he said, "Thank you, Jane. You've tried to be a true friend to me to-day. I'll show you that I don't forget. I was a fool to get in such a rage, but you can't understand and must forgive me. Come, you see I'm quiet now," and he untied the horses and lifted her into his wagon.

"What yer goin' to do?" she asked, as they drove away.

"I'm going to reward you for watching and listening to that scoundrel, but you must not watch me or Mrs. Hol-

croft, or listen to what we say unless we speak before you. If you do I shall be very angry. Now, you've only one thing more to do and that is, show me where this man is hiding."

"But you won't go near him alone?" inquired Jane in much alarm.

"You must do as I bid you," he replied, sternly. "Show me where he's hiding, then stay by the wagon and horses."

"But he same as said he'd kill you."

"You have your orders," was his quiet reply.

She looked scared enough, but remained silent until they reached a shaded spot on the road, then said, "If you don't want him to see you too soon, better tie here. He's around yonder in a grove up on the hill."

Holcroft drove to a tree by the side of the highway and again tied his horses, then took the whip from the wagon. "Are you afraid to go with me a little way and show me just where he is?" he asked.

"No, but you oughtn'ter go."

"Come on, then. You must mind me if you wish to keep my goodwill. I know what I'm about." As in his former encounter, his weapon was again a long, tough whipstock with a leather thong attached. This he cut off and put in his pocket, then followed Jane's rapid lead up the hill. Very soon she said, "There's the place I saw 'im in. If you will go, I'd steal up on him."

"Yes. You stay here." She made no reply, but the moment he disappeared she was upon his trail. Her curiosity was much greater than her timidity, and she justly reasoned that she had little to fear.

Holcroft approached from a point whence Ferguson was expecting no danger. The latter was lying on the ground, gnawing his nails in vexation, when he first heard the farmer's step. Then he saw a dark-visaged man rushing upon him. In the impulse of his terror, he drew his revolver and fired. The ball hissed near, but did no harm, and before Ferguson could use his weapon again, a blow from the whip-

stock paralyzed his arm and the pistol dropped to the ground. So also did its owner a moment later, under a vindictive rain of blows, until he shrieked for mercy.

"Don't move," said Holcroft, sternly, and he picked up the revolver. "So you meant to kill me, eh?"

"No, no, I didn't. I wouldn't have fired if it hadn't been in self-defence and because I hadn't time to think." He spoke with difficulty, for his mouth was bleeding and he was terribly bruised.

"A liar, too," said the farmer, glowering down upon him. "But I knew that before. What did you mean by your threats to my wife?"

"See here, Mr. Holcroft, I'm down and at your mercy. If you'll let me off I'll go away and never trouble you or your wife again."

"Oh, no," said Holcroft, with a bitter laugh. "You'll never, never trouble us again."

"What! do you mean to murder me?" Ferguson half shrieked.

"Would killing such a thing as you be murder? Any jury in the land would acquit me. You ought to be roasted over a slow fire."

The fellow tried to scramble on his knees, but Holcroft hit him another savage blow, and said, "Lie still."

Ferguson began to wring his hands and beg for mercy. His captor stood over him a moment of two irresolutely in his white-heated anger, then thoughts of his wife began to soften him. He could not go to her with blood on his hands—she who had taught him such lessons of forbearance and forgiveness. He put the pistol in his pocket and giving his enemy a kick, said, "Get up."

The man rose with difficulty.

"I won't waste time in asking any promises from *you*, but if you ever trouble my wife or me again, I'll break every bone in your body. Go, quick, before my mood changes, and don't say a word."

As the man tremblingly untied his horse, Jane stepped out before him and said, "I'm a little idiotic girl, am I?"

He was too thoroughly cowed to make any reply and drove as rapidly away as the ground permitted, guiding his horse with difficulty in his maimed condition.

Jane, in the exuberance of her pleasure, began something like a jig on the scene of conflict, and her antics were so ridiculous that Holcroft had to turn away to repress a smile. "You didn't mind me, Jane," he said gravely.

"Well, sir," she replied, "after showin' you the way to 'im, you oughter not grudge me seein' the fun."

"But it isn't nice for little girls to see such things."

"Never saw anything nicer in my life. You're the kind of man I believe in, you are. Golly! only wished *she'd* seen you. I've seen many a rough and tumble 'mong farm hands, but never anything like this. It was only his pistol I was 'fraid of."

"Will you do exactly what I say now?" She nodded.

"Well, go home across the fields and don't, by word or manner, let Mrs. Holcroft know what you've seen or heard and say nothing about meeting me. Just make her think you know nothing at all and that you only watched the man out of sight. Do this and I'll give you a new dress."

"I'd like somethin' else 'sides that."

"Well, what?"

"I'd like to be sure I could stay right on with you."

"Yes, Jane, after to-day, as long as you're a good girl. Now go, for I must get back to my team before this scamp goes by."

She darted homeward as the farmer returned to his wagon. Ferguson soon appeared and seemed much startled as he saw his *nemesis* again. "I'll keep my word," he said, as he drove by.

"You'd better," called the farmer. "You know what to expect now."

Alida was so prostrated by the shock of the interview that she rallied slowly. At last she saw that it was getting late

and that she soon might expect the return of her husband. She dragged herself to the door and again called Jane, but the place was evidently deserted. Evening was coming on tranquilly, with all its sweet June sounds, but now every bird song was like a knell. She sunk on the porch seat and looked at the landscape, already so dear and familiar, as if she were taking final farewell of a friend. Then she turned to the homely kitchen to which she had first been brought. "I can do a little more for him," she thought, "before I make the last sacrifice which will soon bring the end. I think I could have lived—lived, perhaps, till I was old, if I had gone among strangers from the almshouse, but I can't now. My heart is broken. Now that I've seen that man again I understand why my husband cannot love me. Even the thought of touching me must make him shudder. But I can't bear up under such a load much longer and that's my comfort. It's best I should go away now; I couldn't do otherwise," and the tragedy went on in her soul as she feebly prepared her husband's meal.

At last Jane came in with her basket of peas. Her face was so impassive as to suggest that she had no knowledge of anything except that there had been a visitor, and Alida had sunk into such depths of despairing sorrow that she scarcely noticed the child.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"SHRINK FROM YOU?"

HOLCROFT soon came driving slowly up the lane as if nothing unusual was on his mind. Having tied his horses, he brought in an armful of bundles and said, kindly, "Well, Alida, here I am again, and I guess I've brought enough to last well through haying time."

"Yes," she replied, with averted face. This did not trouble him any now, but her extreme pallor did and he added, "You don't look well. I wouldn't mind getting much supper to-night. Let Jane do the work."

"I'd rather do it," she replied.

"Oh, well"—laughing pleasantly—"you shall have your own way. Who has a better right than you, I'd like to know?"

"Don't speak that way," she said almost harshly, under the tension of her feelings. "I—I can't stand it. Speak and look as you did before you went away."

"Jane," said the farmer, "go and gather the eggs."

As soon as they were alone, he began gently, "Alida"—

"Please don't speak so to me to-day. I've endured all I can. I can't keep up another minute unless you let things go on as they were. To-morrow I'll try to tell you all. It's your right."

"I didn't mean to say anything myself till after supper and perhaps not till to-morrow, but I think I'd better. It will be better for us both and our minds will be more at rest. Come with me into the parlor, Alida."

"Well, perhaps the sooner it's over the better," she said, faintly and huskily.

She sunk on the lounge and looked at him with such despairing eyes that tears came into his own.

"Alida," he began hesitatingly, "after I left you this noon I felt I must speak with and be frank with you."

"No, no," she cried, with an imploring gesture, "if it must be said, let me say it. I couldn't endure to hear it from you. Before you went away I understood it all, and this afternoon the truth has been burned into my soul. That horrible man has been here—the man I thought my husband—and he has made it clearer, if possible. I don't blame you that you shrink from me as if I were a leper. I feel as if I were one."

"*I* shrink from *you!*" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Can you think I haven't seen the repugnance growing in spite of yourself? When I thought of that man —especially when he came to-day—I understood *why* too well. I cannot stay here any longer. You'd try to be kind and considerate, but I'd know how you felt all the time. It would not be safe for you and it would not be right for me to stay, either, and that settles it. Be—be as kind to me—as you can a few—a few hours longer and then let me go quietly." Her self-control gave way, and burying her face in her hands, she sobbed convulsively.

In a moment he was on his knees beside her, with his arm about her waist. "Alida, dear Alida," he cried, "we've both been in the dark about each other. What I resolved to do when I started for town was to tell you that I had learned to love you and to throw myself on your mercy. I thought you saw that I was loving you and that you couldn't bear to think of such a thing in an old, homely fellow like me. That was all that was in my mind, so help me God!"

"But—but *he's* been here," she faltered, "you don't realize—"

"I don't believe I do or can, yet, Alida dear, but that blessed Jane's spying trait has served me the best turn in

the world. She heard every brave word you said and I shed tears of joy when she told me; and tears are slow coming to my eyes. You think I shrink from you, do you?" and he kissed her hands passionately. "See," he cried, "I kneel to you in gratitude for all you've been to me and are to me."

"Oh, James, please rise. It's too much."

"No, not till you promise to go with me to a minister and hear me promise to love, cherish—yes, in your case I'll promise to obey."

She bowed her head upon his shoulder in answer. Springing up, he clasped her close and kissed away her tears as he exclaimed, "No more business marriage for me, if you please. There never was a man so in love with his wife."

Suddenly she looked up and said, fearfully, "James, he threatened you. He said you'd never be safe a moment as long as I stayed here."

His answer was a peal of laughter. "I've done more than threaten him. I've whipped him within an inch of his life, and it was the thought of you that led me, in my rage, to spare his life. I'll tell you all—I'm going to tell you everything now. How much trouble I might have saved if I had told you my thoughts. What was there, Alida, in an old fellow like me that led you to care so?"

Looking up shyly, she replied, "I think it was the *man* in you—and—then you stood up for me so."

"Well, love is blind, I suppose, but it don't seem to me that mine is. There never was a man so taken in at his marriage. You were so different from what I expected that I began loving you before I knew it, but I thought you were good to me just as you were to Jane—from a sense of duty—and that you couldn't abide me personally. So I tried to keep out of your way. And, Alida dear, I thought at first that I was taken by your good traits and your education and all that, but I found out at last that I had fallen in love with *you*. Now you know all. You feel better now, don't you?"

"Yes," she breathed softly.

"You've had enough to wear a saint out," he continued,

kindly. "Lie down on the lounge and I'll bring your supper to you."

"No, please. It will do me more good to go on and act as if nothing had happened."

"Well, have your own way, little wife. You're boss now, sure enough."

She drew him to the porch and together they looked upon the June landscape which she had regarded with such despairing eyes an hour before.

"Happiness never kills, after all," she said.

"Shouldn't be alive if it did," he replied. "The birds seem to sing as if they knew."

Jane emerged from the barn door with a basket of eggs and Alida sped away to meet her. The first thing the child knew the arms of her mistress were about her neck and she was kissed again and again.

"What did you do that for?" she asked.

"You'll understand some day."

"Say," said Jane, in an impulse of good-will, "if you're only half married to Mr. Holcroft, I'd go the whole figure, 'fi's you. If you'd a-seen him a-thrashin' that scamp you'd know he's the man to take care of you."

"Yes, Jane, I know. He'll take care of me always."

The next morning Holcroft and Alida drove to town and went to the church which she and her mother used to attend. After the service, they followed the clergyman home, where Alida again told him her story, though not without much help from the farmer. After some kindly reproach that she had not brought her troubles to him at first, the minister performed a ceremony which found deep echoes in both their hearts.

Time and right, sensible living soon remove prejudice from the hearts of the good and stop the mouths of the cynical and scandal-loving. Alida's influence, and the farmer's broadening and more unselfish views, gradually brought him into a better understanding of his faith, and into a kinder sympathy and charity for his neighbors than he had ever

known. His relations to the society of which he was a part became natural and friendly, and his house a pretty and a hospitable home. Even Mrs. Watterly eventually entered its portals. She and others were compelled to agree with Watterly, that Alida was not of the "common sort," and that the happiest good fortune which could befall any man had come to Holcroft when he fell in love with his wife.

THE END

E. P. ROE AS A STUDENT.

E. P. ROE

REMINISCENCES OF HIS LIFE

Copyright, 1899
By DODD, MEAD, & COMPANY.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Boyhood and College Days 321

CHAPTER II

Life as Chaplain 329

CHAPTER III

A Winter Camp 347

CHAPTER IV

Marriage—The Raid toward Richmond 358

CHAPTER V

Hampton Hospital 366

CHAPTER VI

The Hospital Farm and Chapel 376

CHAPTER VII

Pastorate at Highland Falls 382

CHAPTER VIII

Resignation from the Ministry 397

CHAPTER IX

Fruit Culture and Literary Work 401

CHAPTER X

HOME LIFE 410

CHAPTER XI

SANTA BARBARA 421

CHAPTER XII

RETURN TO CORNWALL—LETTERS 438

CHAPTER XIII

LAST BOOK—DEATH 446

CHAPTER XIV

AN ACCOUNT OF E. P. ROE'S BOOKS 461

CHAPTER XV

THE TABLET AND MEMORIAL ADDRESS 469

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Since the death of Edward Payson Roe, in 1888, there have been inquiries from time to time for some record of his life and work, and it is in response to these repeated requests that this volume is issued. While necessarily omitting much that is of too personal a nature for publication, the editor has allowed the subject of these Reminiscences to speak for himself as far as possible, although it has been thought advisable to introduce here and there various papers from outside sources that seem to throw additional light upon his character. It is believed that in this way a clearer picture may be given than would otherwise be obtained of the life of one who was, perhaps, the most popular American author of his generation. The editor's own part of the work has been confined to a simple statement of facts and to supplying connecting links, when such seemed needed, between the various letters and papers.

Thanks are due, and are hereby offered, to all who have kindly contributed material or in other ways assisted in the preparation of this volume.

E. P. ROE

REMINISCENCES OF HIS LIFE

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD AND COLLEGE DAYS

MY brother Edward and I were the youngest of six children, and as he was my senior by but a few years we were playmates and almost inseparable companions in our childhood.

We were born in a roomy old-fashioned house, built by my mother's father for his oldest son, but purchased by my father when he retired from business in New York. A more ideal home for a happy childhood could not easily be found. It stood near the entrance of a beautiful valley through which flowed a clear stream, and was wind-sheltered by high bluffs, yet commanded fine views of the mountains with glimpses of the Hudson showing like lakes between them.

What we called the "side-hill," back of the house, was our chief playground. My brother delighted in climbing the hickory and chestnut trees that grew upon it, and it was here in spring that we searched for wild flowers, from the little hepaticas just peeping above the snow, to the laurel in its full glory. In after years Edward never visited the old home without a tramp to the top of that side-hill or along the wood-road at its base.

Our mother was always an invalid, and the housekeeper, Betsey Williams, who was a member of our family for many years, became like a second mother to us in her care and devotion. But she was no disciplinarian, and I have heard

that when Edward was in a childish passion and she felt unable to cope with the situation she would pick him up bodily and carry him to my mother's couch. There he would sit beside her, not daring to move until he could promise obedience, held spellbound by the authority in her keen black eyes, though she was too weak to raise her hand to her head.

Edward's love of nature was inherited from both father and mother. Often, on lovely June days, he would draw mother's wheeled chair through the broad walks of our large square garden, where the borders on either side were gorgeous with flowers, while I gathered and piled the fragrant blossoms on her lap until she was fairly embowered. Yet one scarcely missed those that were plucked.

Back of the garden ran a clear brook, the overflow from a spring of soft, cool water at the base of the side-hill, and in it we often played and tumbled, soaking and soiling many a fresh clean suit.

As is usually the case with younger sisters, I always followed my brother's lead, and one summer day's adventure in particular stands clearly in my memory. We little children had started off with the avowed intention of looking for wild strawberries. We had secretly planned to visit the old house where my mother was born, which was some distance further up the valley and at that time was unoccupied, but we thought it best not to make any announcement of this project in advance.

Edward had heard that in the cellar there was a stone vault in which our Grandfather Williams kept the money that General Washington had intrusted to his care until it was required to pay off the soldiers of the Revolution while they were encamped near Newburgh. Edward was eager to visit the cellar, thinking that possibly there might still be a few coins left. We entered the empty house by a back door and wandered through the rooms, he entertaining me the while with stories mother had told him of her childhood there.

Then we timidly groped our way down into the large cel-

lar and found the stone vault—but it was filled only with cobwebs and dust!

When we came out and stood in the great kitchen Edward told me another Revolutionary story connected with the spot in our great-grandmother's day.

A company of British soldiers had been quartered upon the family, and the old kitchen swarmed with redcoats and negro servants, for those were still days of slavery in the North. Grandmother Brewster, who was a notable cook, had just placed in the heated brick oven a large baking of bread, pies, and cake. One of the soldiers asked her if they could have these good things provided they could take them away without her knowledge, but while she was in the kitchen. She, believing this impossible, said yes. He waited until everything was removed from the oven and placed upon a large table to cool. Suddenly a quarrel arose between several of the soldiers and one of her favorite colored boys. Fearing the lad would be killed, she rushed into the midst of the crowd and at length succeeded in stopping the fight. When at last peace and quiet were restored, she turned round to find her morning's baking gone—and in a moment she understood the ruse they had practiced upon her.

As Edward talked the whole story seemed very real to us, but when he had finished we walked up to the old oven, and looking into its cavernous depths he said: "*That's* here and the stone vault down cellar, but all those people are dead and gone. How strange and lonely it seems! Let's go."

Then we hurried off to a field near by which we called "the rose-patch." Not far from this spot stood formerly an old mill where snuff was manufactured, and the rose-bushes that in bygone days had yielded their blossoms to scent the snuff were still living and flowering. But among the roses was an abundance of wild strawberries, and the two children soon lost all thoughts of the past in their enjoyment of the luscious fruit. But the old deserted house with its Revolutionary associations never ceased to have great attractions for us. Across the road from it, and nearer the creek, was

a mound of cinders marking the spot where once stood the forge upon which our grandfather wrought the great iron chain which was stretched across the Hudson for the purpose of keeping British ships from sailing beyond it. Some links of this chain are now kept as relics in the Washington "Headquarters" at Newburgh.

In later years, Edward planned to write a story entitled "The Fair Captives of Brooklyn Heights," embodying some incidents in the lives of our Grandfather Williams' sisters, who lived there with their widowed mother. During the Revolution a number of British officers installed themselves at her house, and the old lady promptly locked up her daughters in order to prevent any possible love-making. One of the girls eluded her vigilance, however, married an officer, and fled with him to Canada. She returned after the war was over, but her mother, who had never forgiven the deception, refused to receive her, and she and her husband went to England to live.

In our home at Moodna was always to be found a generous hospitality. Among our most loved and honored guests was Dr. Samuel Cox, who was for many years a prominent clergyman in New York and Brooklyn. My father had been a member of his church and they were lifelong friends. Often, in summer, he and his family spent weeks at a time with us, and we children, as well as our elders, were always charmed listeners to his conversation. He had a fine memory, and it was remarkably well stored with classic poetry. Sometimes he would entertain us with selections from the "Iliad," but more often, when other guests were present and Edward and I were seated on the piazza steps, on warm moonlight evenings, he would repeat whole cantos from "Marmion" or "Lady of the Lake," or perhaps some fine passages from "Paradise Lost."

At times the conversation would turn upon ancient history, and I remember on one occasion he asked Edward and me if we could give him the names of the first Roman triumvirate. At this period of our existence the name "Cæsar"

was associated exclusively with an old colored man whom we often visited and who lived upon a lonely road which is still called "Cæsar's Lane." We were vastly astonished, therefore, to learn that the name had ever been borne by any more illustrious personage than our dusky friend. But we listened, entranced, while the doctor told of the rivalries and conflicts of those two great generals, Cæsar and Pompey, for the empire of the world. He could not remember the name of the third triumvir, and it troubled him greatly. That night, about two o'clock, I was startled by a loud knock at my bedroom door, and Dr. Cox called out, "Mary, are you awake?" I replied that I was—as, indeed, was every one else in the house by that time. "It's Crassus," he said, then returned to his room greatly relieved that he had finally recalled the name. Edward and I never forgot our first lesson in Roman History.

This learned clergyman was often very absent-minded. During one of his visits to us he had been for a drive with his wife and our mother. On their return he stopped at the horse-block, near where Edward and I were playing, threw down the reins, and, engrossed in some train of thought, walked into the house, utterly forgetful of the ladies on the back seat. They, very much amused, continued their conversation and waited to see if he would remember them. Finally, however, as he did not reappear, Edward was called to assist them from the carriage and unharness the horse. Some time afterward the doctor rushed out of the front door and around the house, having just remembered where he left the companions of his drive.

The first school Edward and I attended was a private one for boys and girls kept by our eldest brother, Alfred, in the village of Canterbury, two miles distant from our home. We trudged over the hills together on pleasant days and drove over when the weather was stormy. I well remember the abnormal interest we felt in the health of an aunt of ours who lived near the school and who had some fine fruit trees on her place. After our inquiries in regard to her welfare had

been answered she was sure to invite us to examine the ground beneath those trees, while the merry twinkle in her eyes showed appreciation of the fact that our devotion to her was not altogether disinterested.

Of my brother's later school and college days, the Rev. A. Moss Merwin, now of Pasadena, California, writes:—

"It was at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson I first met Edward, a fellow student in his brother Alfred's classical school. His face and manners were attractive, and intellectually he ranked high among his companions. Well informed as to current events, with a wider knowledge of books than is usual with young men of his years, and with great facility in expressing his thoughts orally and in writing, he commanded our respect from the first. And when we saw from time to time articles from his pen in the New York *Evangelist* descriptive of stirring events, our respect grew into admiration for him who was *facile princeps* in our small literary world. Then as we came to know something of his kindness of heart and enthusiasm for the good and true we loved him.

"His particular friends among the boarding pupils enjoyed the privilege of being invited occasionally to the hospitable home of his parents. What a home it was! Abundant comfort without ostentation or luxury. The father a retired business man, kindly, philanthropic, and an ardent lover of plants and flowers. The mother an invalid in her wheeled chair, a woman with sunshine in eye and voice, of unusual intelligence, highly cultivated, with charming conversational powers.

"In the little Presbyterian church near the school, planted mainly through the exertions of his father and elder brothers, there came a time of special religious interest when Edward was deeply impressed. With loving purpose he sought out two of his most intimate companions, and through his instrumentality they then began the Christian life. One became a successful business man in Chicago, and to the day of his death remembered with gratitude the helping hand and earnest words of E. P. Roe. The other friend remembers that

soon after that decision, when he and Edward were walking through the grounds of the Friends' meeting-house, they covenanted together to study for the ministry.

"We were together again preparing for college at Burr and Burton Seminary, Manchester, Vermont. How enthusiastic he was over the beautiful scenery of that now far-famed summer resort in the Green Mountains! How delighted to send his father a present through his own earnings by sawing several cords of wood!"

About this time our father's property in New York City was destroyed by fire, and owing to the expense of rebuilding he was obliged for a time to practice close economy. But fortunately it was not found necessary to take any of his children from school or college. To quote Mr. Merwin further:—

"At Williams College we saw much of each other. Roe was a fair scholar, more intent at getting at the meaning of the text, and its mythological and historical relations, than in making what is called a fair recitation. His ability as a writer and speaker was recognized early in his college course when elected speaker of his class at a Washington's Birthday banquet. Friends he easily made, and with many remained in pleasant relations to the close of his life. Trouble with his eyes caused him to shorten his course at college, but the authorities, in view of his subsequent success as a writer, gave him his diploma."

My brother excelled in athletic sports in his youth, particularly in swimming and skating. On one occasion when he was home on vacation, he and a young companion were skating on the river. His friend, who was skimming along in advance of him, suddenly fell into an air-hole and sank out of sight. Edward instantly realized that if he went to the spot to rescue him, he also would break through. With quick presence of mind, therefore, he unwound a long worsted muffler from his neck and threw one end of it into the opening. As soon as the struggling boy rose to the surface, Edward shouted, "Take hold of that tippet and I'll pull you

out!" His friend did as he was directed and Edward, by exerting all his strength, succeeded in drawing him out of the water and upon the solid ice, fortunately not much the worse for his immersion.

Adjoining our father's property was that of Mr. Nathaniel Sands, a "Friend" and a gentleman in all that the words imply, who was loved and respected by the whole community. His residence commanded an extended view of the river and mountains and especially of the narrow Gap of the Highlands. At his death the old homestead became the summer residence of his eldest son, Dr. David Sands, the head of a well-known firm of druggists in New York.

While my brother was at the theological seminary, and just about the beginning of the Civil War, he became engaged to Dr. Sands' second daughter, Anna. The young people had known each other from childhood, and this happy culmination of their long friendship was not unexpected by either family.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AS CHAPLAIN

ONE of Edward's schoolmates at Cornwall, writing of him, said: "We met again on a most memorable evening in the early days of the war, when with two young ladies, one of whom became his wife, we rowed out on the Hudson River, under the shadow of Storm King, while the whole sky from west to east flamed with crimson-tinted clouds, that seemed a portent of the scenes to follow. When we reached the dock on our return the evening papers brought the details of the battle of Bull Run, fought on the previous day."

I remember Edward's intense excitement on his return home that night, and his remark that if he were only through his seminary course he would join the army as chaplain. From that time I believe the purpose was constantly in his mind; and the next year, 1862, although his studies were not then completed, he became chaplain of the famous Harris Light Cavalry, under the command of the gallant Kilpatrick, later Brigadier and Major-General, who was always my brother's firm friend.

The following testimony to Edward's work among the soldiers was written upon the field by a correspondent of the New York "Tribune."

"Chaplain Roe, of the Second New York (Harris Light) Cavalry, is a man whose praises are in the mouth of every one for timely and efficient services. He is always with the regiment, and his whole time is devoted to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the men. He is their friend, adviser,

and counsellor, and commands the respect of all who know him—something that cannot be said of every chaplain in the army."

The "Observer" of that year also published a letter written by a private in the Harris Light Cavalry to his parents. In it is found this reference to their chaplain.

"To-day is Sunday, and, as a great exception, it has appeared like Sunday. This morning we had service at headquarters, the chaplain of our regiment officiating, and I think I can safely call him a pious army chaplain, which I cannot say of any others that *I* ever knew; and notwithstanding the little respect most chaplains have shown to them, and still less encouragement, this one, by his mild, gentle, manly, humble, and Christian-like demeanor, has won the respect of all with whom he has had intercourse, from the most profane and vulgar to the most gentlemanly, which few chaplains have been able to do. In a fight he is seen encouraging the men; in the hospital administering to the soldier's wants, both spiritually and bodily. Last winter, during the worst days of a Virginia winter, I have seen him going from camp to camp, distributing his books and papers; and with his own earnings he would buy delicacies that a poor sick soldier would otherwise in vain long for. These and other innumerable like acts have gradually caused every one to at least respect him, and some to love him. His name is Rev. E. P. Roe, Chaplain Harris Light Cavalry. I have been informed that he had just graduated when he came into the army. I think Dr. P—— may know him. I believe he is a Presbyterian. If you had any idea what a chaplain had to contend with, in order to lead a consistent life, you might then understand why I speak so of him. S."

While with this regiment Edward acted as weekly correspondent for the New York "Evangelist." A few of his letters to that paper are here reprinted, in the hope that they may still be found of interest. They are characteristic of the writer and give a clearer idea of his life at this time than can be obtained in any other way.

"Camp Hall's Hill, Oct. 15, 1862

"Messrs. Editors:—Till within a few days past we have been enjoying splendid weather, days as warm and sunny as those of June, and moonlight nights so clear and beautiful that one could sit at his tent door and read ordinary type with perfect ease and pleasure. Of course we improved such favorable weather and held our prayer-meetings nearly every night. I shall never forget one religious service that we had last week.

"As usual, a large fire was kindled in front of the chaplain's tent, and the men, having disposed of their suppers, were beginning to assemble. Soon the musical 'church-call' sounded to hasten the lagging ones, and by the time our exercises commenced about two hundred were present. Our meetings are of a free and general character, open to all who are willing to take part in them. We commence by singing two or three hymns or patriotic songs in succession, the sound of music calling the men together. A prayer is then offered, after which I endeavor by some anecdote or illustration to force home the truth and necessity of a Saviour upon the minds of those present. The Christian members of the regiment then follow in prayer, singing, and exhortation, till we are dispersed by the roll-call. We have interruptions in this, our usual programme, of such a nature, and with such frequency, that we have great reason to be thankful and encouraged. They are occasioned by the stepping forth of soldiers in front of the fire who have hitherto been silent in our meetings, and who either ask the prayers of Christians that they may be led to the Saviour, or calmly and firmly state their intention to enlist under the banner of the Cross, and urge their comrades to do likewise.

"Toward the close of the service I have mentioned, three young men rose up together, and calmly and firmly one after another stated their resolution, with God's help, to live a Christian life. Oh that some of our cold, half-hearted professors could have been here then. Would to God that the voices of those young soldiers, as they urged with simple and earnest eloquence their comrades to come to the Saviour like-

wise, might be heard throughout all the churches of the North, and sound in every prayer-meeting, in our land. Such earnest tones and words would soon disperse the moral and religious apathy that seems to reign undisturbed in many localities, for they would prove that the Spirit of God was present. It was a scene that would have moved the coldest heart, and stirred the most sluggish nature. The starry sky, the full moon overhead flooding all the landscape with the softest and most beautiful radiance, the white tents covering the hillsides, the large fire blazing fitfully up, surrounded by two hundred or more men who might readily be taken at first glance to be a band of Spanish brigands, all conspired to make a picture that any artist would wish to copy. But as you listened to the words of those young men, and the earnest prayer and songs of praise that followed, all such fanciful thoughts of banditti and romance would melt away, and the strange, peculiar costume of those present would become simply the ordinary dress that the rude taste or necessity of the men during their campaign had led them to assume, and the dark-bearded faces, made still more sombre and sinister by the partial light, would resolve themselves into the bronzed, honest features of our American soldiers, now expressive of solemn thought and feeling. Never was a sound more unwelcome and discordant than the roll-call which broke up that assembly.

"After the roll-call a group generally lingers around the fire, and I often find in it those who wish to be spoken with on the subject of religion. So it happened this night. A soldier chanced to be passing by our encampment, and, attracted by the sound of music, stopped at our meeting. A few days before he had received a letter from home stating that his mother was very ill and not expected to live many days. He knew he should never see her again, and his heart was tender and sad. Thus prepared for the truth by the Providence of God, his steps were directed to us, and as he sat there and listened to those three young men as they stated their resolution from thenceforth to serve God, he too re-

solved to be a Christian, and has since found peace in believing. I told him how our prayer-meeting had been started by two or three Christian soldiers meeting openly for prayer, and that the same happy state of things might be brought about in his regiment in a similar manner. He promised that the prayer-meeting should be commenced.

"The 18th of this month (October) was as beautiful and bright a Sabbath morning as ever dawned on Virginia. Though the day and all nature spoke of peace, yet men would not hearken, for it was soon evident that our brief repose was again to be broken. The Third Division of cavalry was encamped on the northwestern edge of the old Bull Run battlefield. The day before we occupied the battlefield itself. The earlier part of the day was spent by the different regiments in preparing to march, and by noon the concentration of the entire command began. Distant outposts, regiments on picket, and scouting parties were drawn in, and soon after the battle-flags of General Kilpatrick, General Davies, and General Custer were seen fluttering through forests or over hills in the direction of the Warrenton and Alexandria pike. Following them were long lines of cavalry and artillery, and above all, a bright October sun that gave to the scene anything but the grimness of war. As evening approached we came out on Warrenton pike. General Davies' brigade had the advance, and part of the Harris Light Cavalry was thrown out as skirmishers. It soon struck the enemy's pickets, and then a running fight was kept up until within a short distance of Gainesville. Our flying artillery took advantage of every high position to send a shell shrieking after the enemy. It was now dark night. The head of our column had advanced up within a short distance of the point where the railroad crossed the pike before entering the village. For a short time there had been an ominous silence on the part of the rebels, and it became necessary to send forward part of the Harris Light Cavalry to find what had become of them. The detachment moved on to cross the railroad embankment, when suddenly, from over its top, at

a given signal, a line of fire at least three hundred yards long flashed out into the night, and a perfect storm of bullets rained over their heads. Fortunately the enemy fired too high to do much execution, and only a few were wounded. Our boys returned the volley, and then retired to a small piece of woods, and for a time a hot skirmish was maintained. Having no knowledge of the force that might be concealed in the place, and the position being too strong to be carried by a night assault, further operations were deferred till morning. The 1st Virginia were left on picket close to the enemy and the rest of the command fell somewhat back and went into camp.

"To one not familiar with army life in the field, our mode of encamping that night would have been extremely interesting and suggestive. We were in the face of the enemy, which is no place for careless security. Each brigade was placed by itself, supporting the batteries which were put in position ready to be used at a moment's notice. The horses of each regiment were drawn up in ranks and tied to stakes driven into the ground for the purpose. Each man slept at the head of his horse, which he kept saddled, and part of the time bridled. Within three minutes the entire division could have been out in line of battle. I have known our regiment to saddle their horses, lead out from the woods, form ranks, count four and stand ready to charge into anything that might oppose, within just three minutes by the watch. In the rear of this warlike array the ammunition wagons and ambulances were parked in regular order, the team horses standing ready harnessed. Thus Kilpatrick's little fighting division lay there that night like a panther crouched ready to spring. During the night wagons came up with rations, which were soon distributed. The groupings around the fires, after this, were picturesque in the extreme. Some of the men, shrouded in their great military overcoats, stood quietly warming themselves, throwing out immense shadows that stretched away till lost in the surrounding darkness. The dusky forms of others might be

seen passing to and fro in the preparation of their rude meal of fried pork and hardtack, while the flickering blaze revealed the burly forms of a still greater number reposing upon the ground in all varieties of attitude. At last the entire division, except the vigilant pickets and sentinels, was wrapped in slumber. At four o'clock the bugle sounded reveille, and the camp was soon all astir. Soon after we saw a flash in the direction of the enemy, and listened breathlessly a moment for the report of rebel cannon, but the long interval and distant heavy rumble that followed satisfied us that a storm other than that of war was about to break over us; and soon it came, with high cold winds and drenching rain. As we cowered around our smoking, dying fires in the dim twilight of that wild October morning—ah! then we thought of being tucked away in snug feather-beds under the old roof-tree at home; but there was no repining, though we all knew that on the coming night many would sleep colder than ever before—so cold that nothing but the breath of God could give warmth again.

"But we were not long left to reflection of any kind, for regiment after regiment now began to take position upon the line of march. General Custer's brigade had the advance. Soon scattering shots and an occasional boom of a cannon told us that we had again found the enemy. But no stand was made until we reached Broad Run, and there the firing became rapid and sharp. Our brigade now came up and was placed in position, and the battle became general. Every now and then a shell would whiz over our heads and explode, inspiring anything but agreeable emotions. Several charges were made on both sides. I wonder if it is possible to give any idea of a rebel charge. Their cries and yells are so peculiar, so wild, shrill, feverish, so ghastly (I had almost said ghostly), for the sounds seem so unreal, more like horrid shrieks heard in a dream than the utterances of living men. The shouting of our men is deeper and hoarser, and partakes more of the chest tone in its character, but the rebels charge with a yell that is something between the

shriek of a woman and the scream of a panther. At times you can close your eyes and imagine that some fierce conflict of another age is passing before you in a dream, so strange and unnatural does it seem to see men engaged in mortal combat. We finally dislodged the enemy from their very strong position and advanced across Broad Run. General Custer took a strong position on a hill above the stream, while General Davies was ordered with his brigade to advance as far as possible toward Warrenton, for General Kilpatrick had received written orders to move out as far as he could upon this road in order to discover the force and intentions of the enemy. The surgeons and ambulances halted in a field between the two brigades. I stayed with them, and was trying to get a feed for my horse, which was evidently beginning to feel the effects of long marches and short rations, when suddenly I heard firing nearly opposite us, on our left flank. At first I thought it was a mere skirmish with some rebels left in the woods and discovered by our men; but the firing became more rapid every moment, and soon General Custer's battery began to shell the woods most vigorously. I saw that the woods were full of men, but could not distinguish ours from the rebels. Two or three aids galloped by in the direction General Davies had taken.

"One remarked in passing, with an ominous look and shake of his head, 'You had better be getting out of here,' which was not a very comforting suggestion to those who had no orders to 'get out of here' or where to get to. It was very evident that something was wrong, and that matters were getting serious. Wagon and ambulance drivers, surgeons and their attendants, contrabands with their led horses—in short, all of us—were like a covey of startled quails, their heads up, aware of danger, but not knowing which way to fly. We could not very well show fight, for a charge by a wagon train would be almost as great a novelty as General Kilpatrick's attacking gunboats with cavalry, which he actually did last summer on the Rappahannock, and destroyed them, too. But we, not at all envious, were glad to receive

orders to retrace our steps; for nothing is so uncomfortable for a soldier as to hear firing in his rear. We were proceeding leisurely and in good order, when an orderly rode rapidly up to our front and turned us off on a by-road through the woods, with an injunction to move rapidly and come out on the main pike near Gainesville. Away we went in the direction of Thoroughfare Gap, the wagons banging and bouncing over stones and stumps, through streams and mudholes, as we followed the sinuosities of a narrow wood-road which finally led into the open field. Here I felt like crying and laughing both—crying with rage at what I then considered our disgraceful retreat; but when I afterward learned what odds we were contending against, I was satisfied that the best generalship was displayed in rapid retreat. And gravity itself would have laughed at the figure we cut. Contrabands and camp followers were careering by in all states of panic. Many had lost their hats in coming through the woods, and it seemed in some cases now that their wool fairly stood upon end, while they, rolling their eyes over their shoulders in the direction of the enemy, exhibited only their whites to the observer in front. Here might be seen an unfortunate darkie hauling on a stubborn mule that with its wonted perversity wanted to turn around and run the other way; there a man trying to raise a horse that had fallen with him; while 'Git up, dar; git up, I tell yer,' resounded from every side. Some poor mules and some led horses fairly got frantic, for what with the beating they received, and with tin kettles rattling and captured chickens cackling between their legs, it was enough to distract any brute; so they kicked and floundered till they burst their girths, and galloped away rejoicing in their freedom. But the comic was soon lost in the tragic. The pursuing enemy was now closing upon us from all sides. The rear guard, which was the Harris Light Cavalry, made many a gallant stand, but what could a few men do against twenty times their number? With many it became a sad race for life and liberty. But before dusk we had the satisfaction of effect-

ually checking the enemy. For the first time in my life I found myself rallying a body of men in a fight. Officers and men coming in rapidly, we soon had a respectable line formed and the enemy's advance was now decidedly checked. Captain Elder, who had brought off all his guns in safety, planted them on an eminence, and soon they were thundering defiance to the baffled enemy. Shell after shell screamed over our heads and exploded. Soon after a part of the First Corps came up, formed a line of battle, and relieved our thinned and wearied ranks. We retired to the friendly shelter of a neighboring forest, and that deep sleep which follows great excitement and exertion quietly stretched us out as motionless and unconscious seemingly as the lifeless forms of our brave comrades that lay cold and stark along the line of our bloody retreat."

"Many changes and much marching and counter-marching have taken place since the soldiers of the Harris Light Cavalry gathered nightly under the old apple tree, or in front of the chaplain's tent, during the warm moonlight evenings of September and October. The rich autumn foliage that then made even poor old desolated Virginia look beautiful has dropped away, and stern winter, rendered all the more grim and forbidding by the ravages of war, now reigns supreme. Many of our number, also, like the leaves, have dropped away. Some, having obtained and squandered their bounty, have treacherously deserted and sneaked away like thievish hounds. The bullet, accident, and sickness have each conspired to lessen our number, and many a noble-hearted fellow who was always first and foremost in all a soldier's duty is now languishing in some hospital, or sleeping beneath the sod that last sleep from which no bugle call shall waken him.

"It seems as if God was teaching us to look to himself, and not to men, for among those that sickness has for the present removed from our number were three who were the very stay and central pillars of our regimental church. Espe-

cially do I feel the loss of Brother Farber, who was as noble a specimen of a Christian soldier as it has ever been my fortune to meet. Uniting culture of heart and mind with a happy disposition, a shrewd and quick perception of character, and a manner that made him popular with all, he was just such an ally as the chaplain needed in the ranks. Though he made his religion respected by all, he also made it attractive, and his society was not shunned, even by the wildest spirits of the regiment. His cheerful smile and words were better than medicine in the hospital, and I almost always found him there when off duty. Nearly two months ago he left us for a hospital in Washington, sick with the typhoid fever, contracted doubtless by over-fatigue in his care of the sick and bodies of the deceased, and by breathing air tainted with disease. I have since received a letter from him stating that he was very sick, and that the surgeon said it would be months before he could join the regiment again, if ever. For aught I know his warfare may now be over and he at rest, for I have received no answer to my reply to his letter. Brothers Vernon and Stillwell are also away sick. Only pastors, and they not fully, can realize the loss that such men are to a chaplain. He has so few capable, warm-hearted coadjutors in a regiment as a general thing. There is such a torrent of evil influences rushing in on every side, that he sorely feels the need of men possessing firm and established Christian characters, who would quietly and consistently stand up for, and live religion on all occasions. Here he has none of the conventionalities and restraints of society to aid him, and even the heavenly influence of Christian parents, of pure sisters, and loving wives is weakened by distance, absence, and sin. But in grappling with the many and powerful demoralizing influences and vices of camp life, one soon learns that but little can be accomplished except by the direct aid and interposition of the Holy Spirit, for nothing short of the grace of God can enable the soldier to resist the evil that assails him on every side.

"While I was on a brief business visit to the North, the

regiment had joined the advance, and on my return I found it out in the neighborhood of Warrenton. After waiting a few days in what remained of our old camp, I found an opportunity of going out to the front with Captain Cook, of our regiment, and a small squad of men. The ride out to Rappahannock Station, where our regiment was last heard from, was full of novelty and interest to one who had never been on a long march before. Captain Cook is a gentleman as well as a good soldier, and his familiarity with the historic region through which we passed made him an exceedingly agreeable companion. The evening of the second day of our journey, which was Sunday, found us considerably beyond Manassas. A dismantled house stood on the brow of a hill in a grove some distance from the road. We rode up to it and concluded to spend the night there. Though it was half ruinous, without windows and doors, and the floor covered with rubbish of every description, but a few moments sufficed to make it sufficiently comfortable for a soldier's purpose. A fire blazing on the hearth, the rubbish cleared away, a blanket hung over the windows and doors, made our night quarters complete. Then gathering around the fire, each broiled his slip of bacon on the end of a stick, and enjoyed this rude repast far better than many a well-appointed banquet in the North, for 'hunger was our sauce.' After supper we had, as it were, family prayers. The old dilapidated mansion, the costume, arms, and varied expressions of the soldiers as they lounged around listening to the Word of God, all brought into view by the flickering blaze that roared within the chimney, made a scene that any artist might wish to copy.

"After marching all the next day we joined our wagon train at dusk, near Rappahannock Station, and found that we were just in time, for the whole army was on the move to Fredericksburg. Joining the train, I marched half the night with them in the darkness and rain. As there was no shelter near, the next day was spent in the rain under a tree; and an attack on the wagon train being expected on the fol-

lowing night, my slumbers were neither very sound nor long continued. But such is the wonderful vitality that life in the open air gives, that one soon recovers from loss of sleep and fatigue. Our regiment moved down to Brook's Station, where it remained doing picket duty till it joined the advance on Fredericksburg.

"Our brigade, with our beloved and lamented General Bayard in command, was drawn up on a hillside preparatory to marching, and I assure you that the long lines and dense masses of cavalry made a splendid and imposing appearance. It was nearly night before we filed off toward Falmouth. The night was dark and misty and the roads broken and wild. Sometimes we would plunge down into a deep gully, at others scramble up the slippery and frozen sides of a steep hill. Every now and then horse and rider would be down, to the great merriment of all witnesses. But the joke became too serious when a horse fell and broke one poor fellow's leg.

"Seen through the mist and darkness, the long extended column, winding among the broken hills, now coming out in bold relief on the brow of one of them, and then descending again into the valley or the gloom of some forest, had a shadowy and phantom-like appearance, and seemed more like a procession in a dream than a goodly number of well-armed troopers on a march. Especially was this spectral effect heightened when a distant part of the column would pass within the lurid glare of some brilliant camp-fire. After floundering through streams and quagmires, and filing through gorges that reminded one of the old Indian ambuscades, we turned off into a forest to encamp for the night. Selecting a tree from under which the snow had partially melted away, a few of us built a fire, then spread our blankets and slept on the ground in the clear, frosty starlight as well as on the softest couch our limbs had ever pressed. Long before daylight, the bugle sounded 'boots and saddles,' and the woods soon resounded with the customary martial clamor of an encampment.

"Suddenly every sound was hushed, for the distant boom

of the two guns that opened the battle of Fredericksburg broke upon our ears. The silence was succeeded by wild shouts of enthusiasm, and soon we were on our way to the scene of action. The sharp rattle of musketry now began to mingle with the report of cannon. As we approached the river the roar of the artillery was truly grand and awful. I can only compare it to a very violent thunder-storm, wherein you hear, at one and the same time, the rumble and mutter of some peal dying away in the distance, the heavy, jarring roll more near, and the loud stunning explosion from the flash overhead. Our cavalry was crowded on a plain in the rear of our batteries. We did not know that the rebels were not replying to our guns, and expected every minute they would get our range. As we remained undisturbed, I concluded that our distance from the river was much greater than I had first supposed; but when the order came to march, and we filed off, by twos, down toward the river, past our batteries, I expected every moment to see the head of our column broken and shattered by shot and shell. I have heard much about 'lazy soldiers and large pay,' but I thought at that time that the soldier who marches steadily and determinedly forward on such occasions earns in five minutes all the pay he ever gets. But the heavy cannonading was only from our own guns, for the rebels were reserving their fire. We soon found that our orders were not to cross, but to go down the river and do picket duty on the extreme left flank. As we marched along, a shell from one of our batteries on a hill above me passed directly over my head. As it hissed by, it gave me an idea of the infinitely short space of time in which many of our poor boys are dashed into eternity.

"The early dawn of Saturday morning saw us returning to the battlefield. About nine o'clock we mounted the hill, and formed upon the plain on the opposite side of the river. As we were taking our position, I heard a whizzing sound, and saw the earth torn up by a solid shot quite near me. They soon screamed over our heads and fell all around us; but, as a general thing, the enemy fired too high. A few hundred

E. P. ROE AS CHAPLAIN, AGE 26.

yards to our front, the shells were bursting constantly. We remained on the plain all that day and night, the fire in front of us sometimes slackening, and sometimes ceasing altogether. We often cast anxious glances at some rebel batteries quite near us on the right, and often wondered why they did not open upon us, for if they did, they could have swept us from the plain in a few moments. Either our batteries occupied them, or they reserved their fire for some purpose. A little after noon, we heard that General Bayard, our division commander, was mortally wounded. Soon after word came that cavalry was needed. Two regiments of the enemy were running, it was said, and the Harris Light Cavalry was wanted to follow them up. Off dashed our men in close column, at full gallop, to the place designated, the surgeon and myself going to the hospital to prepare for our wounded. As we started, the road over which the regiment had just passed, and directly in front of us, was torn up by a solid shot. Whose earnest prayers were heard that day, and the Harris Light Cavalry saved from almost a massacre? The order for cavalry had to pass through three different hands before it reached us, and by the time our men arrived at the spot it was discovered that the enemy's retreat was only a feint, and that batteries were so arranged as to place the party who should follow them between two fires. Our regiment approached near enough to the trap, and were exposed to a sufficiently hot fire, for a few minutes, to be satisfied that if they had charged, as was intended, but few would have returned.

"At the hospital we found poor Bayard. Of all the ghastly wounds I saw that day his was the most awful. It needed but a glance to see, as he calmly stated to those who visited him, 'that his days on earth were numbered.' If his wound had been a mere scratch, he could not have been more cool, quiet, and collected. He talked calmly of his death as of a settled thing, and only inquired particularly how much time he had left on earth. He was told, 'perhaps forty-eight hours.' He did not live twenty-four. My heart sank within

me as he gave me his hand in farewell, and I almost murmured, 'Why are the best taken?' The large house to which the wounded were brought was now filled with mutilated and dying men. Cries and groans resounded from every apartment. Ghastly and bloody wounds met the eye in every direction. Some had their eyes shot out; the tongues of some were swollen out of their mouths; some had their bodies shot through; others were torn and mangled by shell and solid shot, and all were crowded wherever there was any space. The surgeons were hacking off limbs and arms by the dozen. The odor of blood was oppressive. One man called me to him, thinking I was a surgeon, and said that one of his wounds had been dressed, but he found that he had another, which was bleeding rapidly. Another poor fellow held up his arm to me, with a great bulging hole in it, and asked with an expression of pain and anxiety that I could scarcely endure, whether I thought he would have to lose it? Such is the horrid reality of war behind the painted scenes of honor, glory, and romance. However cold an ear the poor fellows may have turned to the story of the Cross when in health, as a general thing they were ready enough now to listen to the offers of mercy. One wounded boy had his leg taken off just as he was entering the hospital, which building was under fire all day, and was repeatedly struck. The scene from the windows of the hospital was truly splendid as night came on. Innumerable camp-fires gleamed from the hillsides, and occasionally the darkness was lighted up by the flash of cannon. But weariness, and the knowledge that our own regiment might be engaged the next day, caused me to seek a place of rest. The medical department of our brigade had been rendered small by the absence of some of its members, and it might be that our duties on the morrow would be very arduous. The ground outside the hospital was so tramped up, muddy, and filled with horses, that it was impossible to sleep there. But there was a stone alley-way under the hospital, filled with tobacco in the leaf, part of it lying on the ground, and part drying overhead. One end of this place

was already filled with wounded men, but the surgeon in charge said that the other would not be occupied before morning, and that I had better stay there. As a light came I saw something white lying near the wall. I first thought it was a dog, and going up, I stirred the object with my foot. On looking closer, I found that it was a ghastly pile of arms and legs from the amputating-room. But I had seen so much of blood and horror during the day that I had grown callous. I quietly spread my blanket within ten feet of the bloody heap, and listened sadly to the shrieks and groans from the hospital above till I fell asleep. The reopening of the battle on Sunday morning awoke me, and as I was rolling up my blankets, a shell bursting near warned me to hasten. I joined the regiment, and with it recrossed the river. We have since been doing picket duty on the Rappahannock.

"Many a careless, light-hearted soldier wore an anxious, troubled look that day, as we stood facing the rebel batteries, and many a loud-mouthed, coarse, swearing fellow was quiet and pale. But I saw no flinching or skulking. You at the North, who cosily read about battles in an arm-chair, know little of a man's sensations who stands in front of the enemy's guns. He hears shot and shell scream and explode over and around him. Before him arises the sulphurous smoke of the conflict. From out of that obscurity he knows that at any moment some swift messenger of death may be speeding on its way to his heart. He thinks of unfinished plans, of bright prospects and hopes for the future. His home, its beloved inmates, and the forms and features of those friends that hold the chief places within his soul rise up before him, and he knows that at any moment he may be snatched from all these, and lie a mangled, bleeding corpse upon the ground. And then come graver and still more solemn thoughts of the shadowy world beyond, and 'conscience, which makes cowards of us all,' awakes. In the mad excitement and tumult of a charge, everything is forgotten. When patiently standing under fire, everything is remembered, and this, of all that

the soldier has to do and endure, is the most difficult and dreaded."

An occasional amusing incident would occur, however, to relieve the gloom of these tragic times. I remember hearing my brother tell of one that took place while crossing a narrow pontoon bridge. A mule, riden by a contraband, and having a number of kettles strung on one side of the saddle and on the other some chickens that had been captured from hen-roosts along the march, suddenly became stubborn when about halfway across the bridge, and resisted all efforts on the part of his rider to make him move on. He was blocking the way for the whole troop. An officer, seeing the situation, shouted the order: "Charge mule!" Instantly half a dozen men rode up and with the points of their sabres convinced the animal of the necessity for a speedy advance. He started off at a dead run, scattering the rattling kettles and squawking hens by the wayside, the poor contraband holding on with arms clasped around the mule's neck, while the troopers followed in wild pursuit, amid shouts and laughter.

CHAPTER III

A WINTER CAMP

THE following letters were written from the winter quarters of the regiment on the Rappahannock, and explain themselves.

"In this letter I merely propose to give some glimpses of camp life. When the army lay quiet for two or three weeks after the battle of Fredericksburg, we began to think of winter quarters; so one fine morning our whole division started out in search of a desirable locality. In some respects it was a rather novel expedition. We were seeking a place that would probably be our home for months; and I assure you, as we marched along, that unknown spot of ground became to us an object of no small anxiety and interest. Those officers who had designs on Washington, rather than Richmond, hoped it would be near the steamboat landing on the Potomac. Many wishes were expressed that wood would be plenty and convenient; for winter quarters without wood is an impossibility. Speculations were indulged in regard to the locality and soil, whether it would be a dry, sheltered little valley, or a bleak cornfield capable of all degrees of mud. The place of encampment selected for our regiment was apparently the latter. I must say that many of us were not very enthusiastic about the position, and we could not feel indifferent, for our comfort and perhaps health depended on the suitableness of the place.

"Imagine yourself, my reader, riding into a large, bleak, hilly cornfield, the stalks still standing, with your whole personal property in this region of the world strapped behind

you on the saddle, your horse sinking at every step fetlock-deep in the soft, spongy soil, and being coolly told to make yourself comfortable here for the winter. Probably you would feel as we suppose the Israelites did when required to make bricks without straw. But necessity and experience have taught the soldier many lessons, and he knows well how to make the best of everything. In a few minutes the long picket lines are uncoiled and stretched from post to post inserted for the purpose. To these the horses are tied and then unsaddled. The little shelter tents range themselves, as if by magic, in long rows between them, and within a half-hour or so the place begins to assume the appearance of a well-laid-out encampment.

"But this is merely temporary, and the building of regular winter quarters is next in order. The size and character of the huts being left to the fancy and ingenuity of each individual, there is, with much apparent sameness, a great deal of diversity and originality to be observed. The most simple is merely a 'dug-out,' as it is termed. A hole is dug six or seven feet square, and from two to four feet deep, and over this is placed the tent. The floor and sides are lined with boards if they are to be had, otherwise round poles and rails answer the purpose. Opening into the 'dug-out' is a small trench two or three feet long, wide at its mouth, and narrowing toward the end furthest from the tent. Across this trench are laid any old pieces of iron that can be found, and upon them is placed earth so as to exclude the air entirely except at a small aperture at the further end, around which is built a sod chimney; and your winter quarters are complete. Thus you may have in your tent all the warmth and cheerfulness of an open fire.

"Myself and servant alone built one of these in an afternoon, and I spent in it some of the coldest weather we have had this winter very comfortably. The 'dug-out' principle enters into the construction of nearly all our little cabins; and, like the foxes, we have holes, and literally live in the 'caves and dens of the earth.' The officers generally build

their quarters in the side of a bank, and have them logged up nicely, and they are very comfortable except in a long storm. Sometimes our frail canvas covering sways terribly in the wintry blasts, and I have often lain down to sleep more than half expecting to find my house gone when I awoke. Still, our little holes in the ground are a hundredfold better than no shelter at all, and far preferable to those in which the soldier 'sleeps the sleep that knows no waking.' Some of the men who have the faculty of making anything and everything with an axe put up quite large substantial log shanties, with two or three tiers of berths, as in a steamboat. Some have quite a neat, homelike appearance, and are furnished with fanciful little tables and shelves according to the tastes and wants of the occupants. Others are dismal and dirty in the extreme, and are mere dens. Nothing shows the character of the men more thoroughly than the little huts they inhabit. A few are too indolent to build themselves anything, and are still living in their shelter tents. But over the heads of us all is merely a canvas roof, which will often leak, and it is a very common thing to see puddles of water, or a muddy floor, in our winter quarters.

"Still, those who are well live in the main a very comfortable life. The abundance of pure air and exercise makes us strong and vigorous. It does not always storm. We have many days that are warm and sunny, and then give me camp life in preference to any other. The soldiers sit and lounge around their cabin doors in motley groups, reading (if they have anything to read), smoking, and gossiping, for a camp is a little miniature city, with its daily budget of news and sensations, its streets, squares, and centres, and also many of its nuisances. For the roar of New York we have a drowsy, diminutive hum, frequently broken rudely by a loud laugh or command, the clangor of weapons, and sometimes, I am sorry to say, by loud oaths. Instead of musical chimes from Trinity and her sister steeples, the silvery notes of the bugles proclaim the hours and duties of the day. Our lights glimmer and flicker out upon the night like long rows of

glowworms rather than Broadway lamps; and instead of the heavy tramp of police armed with star and club, the night-long rattle of sabres shows that the guards and sentinels are on their posts of duty. Sometimes there will be a heavy fall of snow during the night, and then the tents and cabins look like huge snow-banks, and the poor horses shiver all the more under the cold white blankets so summarily furnished; the only ones they ever get. These suffer more than the men, for in the main they can have no shelter, and often have to do hard work on short rations. Their gaunt appearance and the number of their dead tells its own story. Our colonel remarked one day that he hoped the mud would get so soft and deep that the horses would sink in sufficiently to enable them to stand upright.

"The greatest hardship of a soldier's life in winter is picket duty. For instance, our whole brigade, recently assigned to Colonel Kilpatrick, left their comfortable quarters a few mornings ago, and went out on picket duty for ten days. A cold, wet snow filled the air and clung to and dampened everything. It settled on one's hair and neck, melted, and ran down his back, producing a general feeling of discomfort. As the men formed preparatory to marching, their uniforms of blue rapidly changed to white, and as they filed off in the dim morning light they presented a shadowy, ghost-like appearance. When you realize what it is to march eighteen or twenty miles in such a storm over horrible roads, and then form a cordon of pickets twenty miles long in a wild, desolate country, you have some idea of the not unusual experience of a soldier.

"When he reaches his destination, it is not a disagreeable journey over, and comfortable quarters in which to dry and refresh himself. All his conditions of comfort are carried on his person, or strapped to his saddle, and he is thankful even for the shelter of a pine wood. Immediately on arrival, without time for rest, a large detachment must form the picket line, and stand ever on the alert from two to four hours at a time, be it day or night. It should not be for-

gotten, during these long winter evenings when the stormy wind sweeps and howls around your comfortable dwellings, that among the wild woods and hills of Virginia, or on the plains of the far West, the patient sentinel walks his desolate beat, or sits like an equestrian statue on his horse, thus forming with his own chilled and weary frame a living breastwork and defence for your homes. Pray for him, that during these long, lonely hours of hardship and danger our merciful God may excite within his mind thoughts of that better life and happier world where the weary are at rest—where even the names of enemy and war are forgotten."

"The regiment referred to is the Ninth New York Cavalry. Their chaplain is not with them at present. My offer to preach for them on the Sabbath was readily accepted, and though at the time of service it was cold and even raining slightly, a large congregation turned out and remained patiently throughout the service. One of their officers remarked afterward that he had not had the pleasure of attending anything of the kind before for five months.

"If Christians North, who have piles of reading matter lying idly about their houses, could see how eagerly those men pressed forward to get the few tracts I offered, they would suffer it to remain thus useless no longer. Our soldiers seem to be hungry and almost starving for the want of mental and moral nourishment.

"I often feel it my duty to be somewhat officious, and to offer my service outside of my regiment sometimes, for even such as I can give is better than nothing, which would be their lot if some did not go forward. I think Christians should be aggressive in their character, and seek opportunities to extend the dominion of their King. There are too many professors who are like a certain chaplain, concerning whom I heard an officer remark, 'that he was a good, inoffensive man, and never disturbed the devil nor any one else in the camp.' A prayer-meeting was appointed on Monday even-

ing, but on the morning of that day the regiment received marching orders and departed for parts unknown.

"One of the most remarkable conversions in our regiment is that of a quartermaster's sergeant. The man, although around the camp attending to his duties, is in a critical state of health, bleeding almost daily at the lungs. When but a mere boy he ran away from home because punished severely by his father for some fault, and was not heard from for over two years, during which time he suffered many hardships in the West. Not long after his discovery his father died and left a mother and a sister dependent upon him for support. This responsibility he nobly undertook, and worked hard, early and late, and denied himself everything to give them the comforts of life. Still, he was noted for his fiery and ungovernable spirit, which often got him into trouble. At an early age he went to sea and visited nearly all parts of the world. He engaged extensively in smuggling, which occupation he followed both in English and Spanish waters. He returned home from this roving, reckless life but a short time before the war broke out, and was among the first to enlist. During the past summer he has often been in circumstances of the greatest peril, but escaped unharmed. Once, in the confusion of battle, he found himself directly in front of a battery loaded with grape and canister. For some reason or other his horse would not move, but stood stock still, and thus he had to wait for the terrible discharge which soon came. He said it seemed as if a perfect torrent of iron hail rushed by and all around him, and that his only thought was that his time had come now, and that the devil had got him then surely. By a miracle, as it seemed to him, he escaped unharmed, and was enabled to get out of range. Many and many a time he had heard the bullets hiss by his ears, and the shrill screams of shell overhead, but they raised in his mind no thoughts of God or repentance.

"As I described in a former letter, a prayer-meeting was started in the camp, and held in the quarters of the new recruits. He heard the singing, and passing by the next day

remarked to a new recruit that 'they seemed happy down there last night—guessed they must have had some whiskey.' The person addressed happened to be one of the three Christian men who first started the prayer-meeting, and he explained to the sergeant the somewhat different source and occasion of their happiness. The sergeant promised to attend that evening, which he did, and the 'still small voice' of the Spirit spoke to him louder than the thunders of the battlefield.

"An evening or two after that I noticed him among those who had come to the chaplain's tent to be conversed with on the subject of religion. I was struck by the contented, happy expression of his face. He told me that he had gone from that prayer-meeting to his tent, and commenced reading a Testament. His tent-mate came along, and he immediately put out his light and hid his book. When he was alone again he knelt and prayed for the first time in his life, and afterward, he said, 'he felt so happy he could not sleep.'

"The next day, while about his work, something vexed him, and he swore, before he thought, as usual. He said 'it grieved him so that he sat down and cried.' Though, as it were, alone in the world and bereft by death of almost every friend he loved, and now seemingly suffering from an incurable disease, he is a happy Christian man.

"In our meetings he has to be constantly on his guard against over-excitement, since it would cause him to bleed at his lungs, but the expression of his face, as he sits quietly in one corner or beside the fire, shows how intense and keen is his enjoyment of that which he is forbidden to take part in actively. At first his change of life caused a good deal of remark and some merriment in his company. He would be asked 'when he was going up to heaven.' When he commenced his evening devotions there was at first a good deal of jesting. 'The quartermaster is going to pray' would be called out, and remarks of a similar nature. They soon saw that he was sincere and respected him, and 'now,' he says, 'he can hear a pin drop while he is at prayer.'

"This is one of many of the interesting cases of conversion in our regiment. The chief feature of this work, however, seems to be the renewal of backsliders in their allegiance to God. But time will not permit me to write more at present."

"How often when a boy I have shuddered at Indian atrocities. With what morbid pleasure I have searched through the early records of colonial history for details of horror, fatal surprise, and midnight massacre. How I have watched in imagination, with suspended breath, the wary, noiseless approach of the painted savages, till with one wide-ringing war-whoop they rushed upon their unconscious victims, destined now to either death or captivity. The dangers and terrors of open battle seemed nothing to this constant dread of an unseen treacherous foe. I little thought that it would one day be my fortune to live under very similar circumstances, for life in Virginia now is not so very different from that of our forefathers a century or more ago. Pioneers in this wilderness of despotism and treason, we are exposed to dangers and hardships not much inferior to theirs. Ever near us we know there is a great army watching with sleepless vigilance, and, like a wild beast crouching for its leap, it is ready to take advantage of the slightest mistake or show of weakness on our part. It is very strange, truly, when one comes to realize it, this living for years within a few miles of thousands who would take your life in a moment if they got a chance.

"The forests and country around us swarm with guerillas. In place of some savage Indian chief, the terror of the whole border, the frontiers of our army are infested by the ubiquitous Mosby. The capture of a sutler's train near Fairfax and a raid upon an outpost on the Rappahannock occurring at the same time are both ascribed to Mosby in person by the soldiers. If a picket hears a distant gallop in the night upon one flank of the army, and a sudden shot startles the air upon the other flank, Mosby is invariably the author of both

alarms. No wonder the poor contrabands say 'Mosby mus' be like de debbel and go all ober to oncst.' He was once captured by our regiment while bearing despatches and afterward exchanged. After he was taken he tried to escape by running his horse, but one of our men sent a bullet whistling so near his head that it produced a sober second thought, and he, from that time, followed quietly. But he was not so famous then, and had not so many trained associates like-minded with himself. Now they follow a marching column like hungry sharks about a ship, and woe be to the man that lags behind or strays from the main body.

"This evil has one great advantage, however, and that is the almost entire suppression of straggling. Mosby and his companions have done more to abolish this disgraceful custom in our army than all the orders and edicts from the War Department and Major Generals down. A year or more ago, I saw bodies of men marching in a way that reminded one of a comet, the head of the regiment being the nucleus, the density decreasing rapidly as you went toward the rear, and finally a straggling raft of men scattered over two or three miles of territory constituting the tail. Now you will find a column moving trimly and compactly, and the rear files often looking suspiciously over their shoulders among the dark pines through which they are passing, for sometimes, especially at nights, shots are fired into the rear.

"There are very few in the cavalry that have not had narrow escapes, for our position on the front and flanks of the army always brings us next to Mosby. Just before we crossed the Rappahannock the last time, our division commissary, Lieutenant Hedges, was returning to his quarters from a short ride to another part of the army, when he was hailed and ordered to surrender. 'Never,' he replied, at the same time striking spurs to his horse and leaning down upon him. He succeeded in escaping, but not before the guerilla, or as it is affirmed, Mosby in person, put a ball through his body. For some days he was not expected to live, but is now

recovering slowly. I have had two or three narrow escapes myself where it almost seemed that Providence interfered to save my life. Once, when our regiment was doing picket duty at a distant outpost, I rode down to General Kilpatrick's headquarters on some business. As I was starting to return in the dusk of the evening, the general came out and asked me to stay with him that night. I replied that with his permission I would come again in the morning, and that I would rather be with my regiment at night; but as he insisted upon it, I stayed. The next morning, a little after daylight, one of our men was shot dead and robbed upon the road that I would have taken. A woman living near said that two bushwhackers had spent the night upon the road with the avowed intention of murdering and robbing the first man that went by. As no one passed that way during the early part of the night, they went into a house and slept till morning, and again were on the road in time to meet poor Francher of Company B, who had been after his pay. They took this, for his pocket was found turned inside out. It was my sad duty to bury him the next day, and as we lowered him into his lonely grave, I could not help asking myself, Why am I not in his place?

"Once again, last November, while on the march, Lieutenant Whitaker and myself were about to pass over a road between our wagon train and General Kilpatrick's headquarters, when a little incident detained us about fifteen minutes. As we were going by the house of quite a noted secessionist, some of our boys began to make free in his cabbage garden and poultry yard, and a scuffle ensued between the old citizen, his wife and daughter, and the soldiers. An infantry colonel who was at the house came violently out, and instead of quietly showing his rank and firmly ordering the men away, commenced cutting them with his sword, and made some quite serious wounds. It was with great difficulty that we prevented our men from killing him on the spot. But as the colonel outranked us, we could do nothing with him, and so passed on, but before we got fairly started upon the road

again we met a man running, breathless, with his hat off, who said that he had just escaped from the guerillas. Lieutenant Newton of the First Vermont Cavalry was passing over the road with several men, when fifteen rebels sprang out upon him, killed one, took two prisoners, and the rest saved themselves only by rapid flight. If we had not been detained, we would have arrived at the same spot a few minutes earlier and received their concentrated fire.

"At times they have captured our mail, and afterward they have taunted us by shouting out the contents of our letters to our pickets across the Rappahannock. One very dark night they slipped into the quarters of one of our officers while he was on picket, shot his colored servant, and carried him off to Richmond. Thus vigilance is a cardinal virtue in this, as well as in the Christian warfare. But we never suffered as much on the south as on the north side of the Rappahannock. The country between the two rivers is now thoroughly occupied by our troops, and our picket lines so close and well posted as to render it almost impossible for the rebels to indulge themselves this winter in many murdering and horse-stealing expeditions."

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE—THE RAID TOWARD RICHMOND

IN November, 1863, Edward received a month's leave of absence from his regiment, and during this time was married to Miss Anna Sands. The ceremony was performed by the venerable Dr. Adams in Madison Square Church, and was followed by a large reception at the bride's home in Seventeenth Street, New York. Leaving his bride there when the furlough was over, my brother returned to his regiment.

In this letter, written just after reaching camp, he dwells upon some of the contrasts of army life.

"After a long absence I experienced a decided thrill of pleasure on finding myself once more among the white tents and familiar scenes of the camp, for there is something very fascinating about army life, notwithstanding its hardship and exposure. Very pleasant, too, was the hearty welcome I received, and numberless great brown hands, reeking with moisture and pork grease from the meal they were superintending, gave me a grip that made my joints snap again. Still, I much preferred it to your fashionable Northern two-fingered touch. It had a language whose meaning I liked. It showed I had the first requisite for doing good among them—their confidence and affection. I found only a part, though a large part, of my regiment at this place, which is a dismounted cavalry camp, containing the fragments of twenty or thirty regiments. Men whose horses have given out or been killed at the front come here and remain till they are again mounted and equipped, when they rejoin their com-

mands. Our stay here will probably be brief, for we are ordered to the front as soon as possible.

"One Saturday morning the monotony of camp life was decidedly broken. The day had been warm, and for a time the hum of camp activity had subsided almost into silence. The orderlies went to and fro as usual, but their horses had a listless, indolent canter, characteristic of all exertion at such a time. But as the day declined there were marks of unusual bustle at headquarters. A ball was to be given that evening by the commanding officer. All officers present of our regiment were invited. As far as I could learn, music, dancing, and drinking were to be the staple amusements of the evening. Not caring to participate in the two latter, and as I could enjoy the first in my tent, I expected to remain very quietly at my quarters. At dusk the revelry commenced. At nine o'clock a carriage drove up to our quarters. It contained Captain Downing of our regiment, who had just come in from the front, bringing with him the dead body of one of our officers who had been drowned while bathing. This was sad news indeed, for Lieutenant Stewart was a good soldier and very popular. The captain wished to see the officer in command of our detachment. I went up to the headquarters to assist in finding him. All was gayety and frolic there. It was truly a beautiful scene. The trees were hung with Chinese lanterns of many colors. The guards paced backward and forward on the spacious lawn, their arms glittering in the moonlight, which glimmered through the grand old trees. In the distance the Potomac lay like a silver lake, with here and there a white sail upon its bosom. Over the green turf gayly dressed ladies and officers in rich uniform were tripping some light measure, while the clinking of glasses showed that the wine was passing freely. No one could help enjoying the music from the full military band.

"Having noted the picturesque beauty of the scene, and moralized to myself awhile unnoticed among the throng, I thought I would step over to the hospital and see how the sick boys were enjoying the revel. It was not over fifty yards

from the music-stand. Though it might be pleasure to others, it was death to them. One poor fellow, far gone with the typhoid fever, and excited by the music and noise, was talking to himself in wild delirium. He has since died. All were restless and sleepless. I said a few quieting words, and was about leaving when a man asked me if I would not offer a prayer. 'I am not a Christian man,' he remarked, 'but I would like to hear a prayer to-night.' Of course I complied, and soon the words of supplication were mingling with the gay notes of the quickstep. I have seen the man since several times, and have good reason to believe that he has become a sincere, earnest Christian. The contrast in his two modes of life will be most marked. He told me that when at home he would often take his wife to church, and then ride on further and trade horses during the service, and call for his wife on his return. As may be imagined, army life had not improved his morals. Still, the influence of his Christian wife followed him, and during his days of sickness came back in tenfold power, and the kindly Spirit of our merciful Father, ever-striving, led him to the Saviour.

"After leaving the hospital I met the sergeant of the guard, and found him arming a body of men. 'We are going to have trouble to-night,' he said to me. The camp below was in a ferment. There were many there who loved whiskey as well as the more privileged at headquarters. At first the rioters (who were mainly from a regiment of regulars) threatened to appropriate the officers' stores and break up the ball. But hardly daring to do that, they turned their attention to a sutler's tent and eating-house. They soon demolished his establishment and set fire to his premises. They here obtained the much desired whiskey, and excited by liquor, they boldly began preparations to attack another sutler who was unpopular. The riot was now getting formidable. From my tent I could overlook the whole camp and scenes at headquarters. Meantime our regiment was arming and procuring ammunition. Fifty of our men were already acting as guards. They formed and received

their cartridges in front of our tents, thus drawing attention to the headquarters of our detachment, which I thought at one time would provoke an attack upon us. I dreaded this, for one of our officers had left his wife in my charge at the commencement of the disturbance. Our men then marched to headquarters, fearing the first attack would be there. For a few moments all was still throughout the camp. Then there were signals in all directions. In a few moments more the mules were stampeded from the corral. They then proceeded to attack the sutler's tent just below us. Here the guards fired upon them, which caused them to retreat to the burning sutler's tent in the middle of the camp. Then I could see our men coming down from the headquarters on a full run. Wheeling at a certain point, they charged without a moment's hesitation. For a short time shots were fired in rapid succession, when the rioters broke and ran. The ball was arrested. The order was given, 'Every officer to his post.' The ladies, pale and frightened, were huddled together, asking anxious questions. Many of the officers might be seen in their ball-dress walking and riding through the camp with sword and pistol driving the men into their tents. Such volleys of horrible oaths as were heard in every direction I hope may never shock my ears again. Officers cursed the men, and the men cursed the officers. For a time things looked rather serious. Meanwhile our boys stood grim and expectant, ready to quell any show of resistance. In a few minutes the whole camp was under arms, but the ringleaders having been caught, quiet was eventually restored. My heart ached for the young wife who saw the exposure of her husband and felt her own danger, and who was compelled to listen to the awful profanity of the hour. I will say, for the benefit of all concerned, that there was nothing of a political nature in the outbreak. Whatever may be the soldiers' vices, they have not yet sunk so far as to sympathize with Northern 'copperheads.' The cause, as far as I could learn, was the unpopularity of the sutlers, jealousy of our regiment because the

guard of honor for the evening was chosen from it, and a desire for whiskey, for which a certain class will do and dare anything. After quiet was restored the dancing, music, and drinking were resumed as though nothing had happened. Meanwhile, on one side the poor fellows in the hospital tossed and moaned and raved in their restlessness and delirium, and on the other lay the two rioters stiff and stark upon the ground, their souls rudely thrust out into the unknown amid riot and intoxication, soon to be sobered but too well by their abrupt plunge into the dusk waters of death. Life presents to the close observer peculiar phases and contrasts at all times, but it seems that in the events of this evening there was a strange mingling of life and death, pleasure and pain. Yet in the sick and repentant soldier God was at least fashioning one soul from out this moral and social chaos for the perfect symmetry of heaven. I had hoped that after the night's uproar we should have a quiet Sabbath, but was disappointed in this, for orders came in the morning to arm, mount, and equip every available man and send them all to the front. And so throughout the day the clangor of arms, the trampling of men and horses, and the words of command, made the quiet peacefulness of a Northern Sabbath a thing scarcely to be imagined."

Late in February, 1864, Edward joined General Kilpatrick in his famous raid toward Richmond. He wrote a brief account of this, which was published in "Lippincott's Magazine."

"In the dusk of Sunday evening four thousand men were massed in the woods on the banks of the Rapidan. Our scouts opened the way by wading the stream and pouncing upon the unsuspecting picket of twenty Confederates opposite. Then away we went across a cold, rapid river, marching all that night through the dim woods and openings in a country that was emphatically the enemy's. Lee's entire army was on our right, the main Confederate cavalry force on our left. The strength of our column and its objective point could not remain long unknown.

"In some unimportant ways I acted as aid for Kilpatrick. A few hundred yards in advance of the main body rode a vanguard of two hundred men thrown forward to warn us should we strike any considerable number of the enemy's cavalry. As is ever the case, the horses of a small force will walk away from a much larger body, and it was necessary form time to time to send word to the vanguard, ordering it to 'slow up.' This order was occasionally intrusted to me. I was to gallop over the interval between the two columns, then draw up by the roadside and sit motionless on my horse till the general with his staff came up. The slightest irregularity of action would bring a shot from our own men, while the prospect of an interview with the Johnnies while thus isolated was always good. I saw one of our officers shot that night. He had ridden carelessly into the woods, and rode out again just before the head of the column, without instantly accounting for himself. As it was of vital importance to keep the movement secret as long as possible, the poor fellow was silenced in sad error as to his identity.

"On we rode, night and day, with the briefest possible halts. At one point we nearly captured a railroad train, and might easily have succeeded had not the station and warehouses been in flames. As it was, the train approached us closely, then backed, the shrieking engine giving the impression of being startled to the last degree.

"On a dreary, drizzling, foggy day we passed a milestone on which was lettered, 'Four miles to Richmond.' It was still 'on to Richmond' with us for what seemed a long way further, and then came a considerable period of hesitancy, in which the command was drawn up for the final dash. The enemy shelled a field near us vigorously, but fortunately, or unfortunately, the fog was so dense that neither party could make accurate observations or do much execution.

"For reasons that have passed into history, the attack was not made. We withdrew six miles from the city and went into camp.

"I had scarcely begun to enjoy much-needed rest before the Confederates came up in the darkness and shelled us out of such quarters as we had found. We had to leave our boiling coffee behind us—one of the greatest hardships I have ever known. Then followed a long night ride down the Peninsula, in driving sleet and rain.

"The next morning the sun broke out gloriously, warming and drying our chilled, wet forms. Nearly all that day we maintained a line of battle confronting the pursuing enemy. One brigade would take a defensive position, while the other would march about five miles to a commanding point, where it in turn would form a line. The first brigade would then give way, pass through the second, and take position well to the rear. Thus, although retreating, we were always ready to fight. At one point the enemy pressed us closely, and I saw a magnificent cavalry charge down a gentle descent in the road. Every sabre seemed tipped with fire in the brilliant sunshine.

"In the afternoon it became evident that there was a body of troops before us. Who or what they were was at first unknown, and for a time the impression prevailed that we would have to cut our way through by a headlong charge. We soon learned, however, that the force was a brigade of colored infantry, sent up to cover our retreat. It was the first time we had seen negro troops, but as the long line of glistening bayonets and light-blue uniforms came into view, prejudices, if any there were, vanished at once, and a cheer from the begrimed troopers rang down our line, waking the echoes. It was a pleasant thing to march past that array of faces, friendly though black, and know we were safe. They represented the F.F.V.'s of Old Virginia we then wished to see. On the last day of the march my horse gave out, compelling me to walk and lead him.

"On the day after our arrival at Yorktown Kilpatrick gave me despatches for the authorities at Washington. President Lincoln, learning that I had just returned from the raid, sent for me, and I had a memorable interview with

him alone in his private room. He expressed profound solicitude for Colonel Dahlgren and his party. They had been detached from the main force, and I could give no information concerning them. We eventually learned of the death of that heroic young officer, Colonel Dahlgren."

CHAPTER V

HAMPTON HOSPITAL

IN March, 1864, Edward began his duties as chaplain of Hampton Hospital, having been appointed to this position before the raid described in the preceding chapter was undertaken. Mrs. Roe joined him at Washington and they went to Hampton together. A tribute is here due the brave young wife, who, leaving a home of luxury, accepted without a word of regret the privations of hospital life and was untiring in her devotion to the sick and wounded. The letters which follow show what that life was during the last two years of the war. The first is an appeal for books for the sick soldiers made through "The Evangelist," and is preceded by a note of explanation from the editors of that paper.

"We have received the following letter from the esteemed and efficient chaplain of the Hampton Hospital, Virginia, Rev. Mr. Roe, who, as it will be seen, is desirous of securing a well-selected soldiers' library for the use of the hospital. Many of our readers formed an agreeable acquaintance with Mr. Roe, through his correspondence with "The Evangelist" while chaplain of the Harris Light Cavalry; and we would refer all others for an estimate of the man, as also of the nature and extent of his duties in his new position, to an interesting paper in the August number of "Harper's Magazine," on the Chesapeake and Hampton hospitals. We shall take pleasure in aiding this praiseworthy object in every way in our power, and we trust that the money required for the purchase of these books will be speedily contributed.

"U. S. General Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Va.
July 27, 1864

"'Readers of The Evangelist:—Pardon me if I say a few plain words in preface to a request. I wish to appeal to a quality that I hope is universal—gratitude. That the North is grateful for the self-sacrifice of its soldiers is well proved by its noble charities in their behalf. But, my Northern friends, you who dwell securely in beautiful and healthful homes, can you not give a little more for those who are giving all for you?

"'The U. S. General Hospital at Hampton, Va., is very large this summer. The average is two thousand five hundred patients, and we often have three thousand. Accommodations are in process of construction for still larger numbers. This is now the nearest permanent hospital to General Grant's army. Almost daily transports from the front leave at our wharf sick and mutilated men by hundreds, and we in turn send those North who are able to bear further transportation. Thus our wards become mainly filled with what are termed the "worst cases"— men with whom the struggle for life will be long and doubtful. I could take you through our wards, and show you long rows of men with thigh amputations, fractured thighs; men who have lost arms, hands, and both their feet; and in short, men with great gaping, ghastly wounds in every part of the body. With such injuries nothing will sustain but cheerful courage; despondency is almost always fatal. The only true basis of such courage is God's religion, but to this all-important condition much can be added that is most excellent. But could you ask for more than these men have done and suffered? I think they have done their part. Yours is not so hard, but it is important. In your abundant provisions for their suffering bodies, do not forget rations for their minds. There are hundreds in this hospital who must lie upon their beds, weeks, and even months, before they can even hope to hobble out into the world again with crutch and cane. How shall they spend these long, hot, weary days? Give them cheer-

ful, entertaining, instructive books, and the question is about solved. Who can calculate the value of a brave, cheerful book? It stimulates and strengthens the mind, which reacts upon the weakened body, and the man is at once made stronger, wiser, and better. I felt that first of all I ought to have a religious library, and through some effort, and the kindness of friends, have obtained a very fair collection. But cheerful, light, entertaining books are few and far between, while there is almost an entire dearth of histories, travels, etc. I find that sick soldiers, even the best of them, are like good people North, they do not like religious reading all the time. The works of Irving, John S. C. Abbott, Dickens, Cooper, Scott, and T. S. Arthur, would be invaluable from both a sanitary and a moral point of view, for they would remove the parent of all evils—idleness. Poetry also is very much asked for. My simple request, therefore, is that out of gratitude to the brave suffering men who throng the wards of Hampton Hospital, you would send them good cheerful books. I have an excellent librarian, and I promise that they shall be carefully looked after and preserved. Among the thousands who have been here and gone away, I have scarcely lost a book.

" 'Messrs. Harpers, and Appletons, and other prominent city publishers, have generously offered me their books at half price for hospital purposes. All contributions in money sent to me, or to the offices of the New York "Evangelist," the "Observer," and the Brooklyn "Daily Union" will be promptly and judiciously laid out for such books as are needed. All contributions in books sent to the abovenamed places will be forwarded to the hospital in my care.' "

Some years after the war was over, my brother took a trip to Fortress Monroe and visited the scenes of his former labors. I quote from a letter telling of the result of his appeal for a soldiers' library and of the subsequent use that was made of the books.

"We entered the fort, presented our letter to General Barry, in command, who received us with the utmost cour-

tesy. The band discoursed delightful music. We examined the mitrailleuse, of which the world has heard so much of late. One of the most interesting points to me was the Post Library. Here among many others I found all the books that once formed our hospital library. Loyal Northern friends, who were ever caring for the soldier's well-being, enabled me to gather and purchase about three thousand volumes. I know that it will be gratifying to them to learn that their gifts, so far from being lost or destroyed, are all here in excellent order, and still doing the work for which they were designed. When a book becomes badly worn it is sent away and rebound. The private soldiers, of which there are several hundred, as well as the officers, have free access to them. I was told by the soldier in charge that between two and three hundred of these books were taken out and read monthly. Under General Barry's careful supervision they will be in use for years to come. He evidently regards his men as something more than machines."

It was inevitable that my brother should witness many sad partings during those long years of conflict, and the strain upon his sympathies was very great, as may be seen from the letters that follow.

"Among the painful and tragic events that occurred in our hospital at Fortress Monroe, there was one wherein heaven and earth were strangely mingled. The arm of a strong, powerful man had been amputated at the shoulder joint. He was full of vitality and made a long but vain struggle for life. Day after day, and week after week, he lay, scarcely daring to move, lest the artery should break and his life blood ebb away. But ever at his side (it seemed to me that she almost never left him) sat his true, patient wife. Strange and incongruous did her slight and graceful form, her pale, beautiful face appear in that place of wounds and death. The rough soldiers were never rough or profane in her presence, and their kindly sympathy often touched me. For long weeks the scale turned for neither life nor death, but at last the sharp agony of hope and fear ended in the dull

pain of despair. He must die. The artery broke and bled again and again, and skill would soon be of no avail. Some time previous to this, a message had come to the poor wife that her mother was dying, and she was requested to return home immediately.

"'No,' she said, 'my mother is among friends; my husband is alone; I must stay with him.'

"Late one night, when the certainty of death was apparent, they sent for me, and we three had a long, calm talk in the dim, crowded ward. The brave, true soldier did not regret that he had entered his country's service, though it cost him so dearly, but he spoke a few words in regard to those who caused the war that must ever hang upon them like millstones. Turning to his young wife with an affection beautiful to look upon, he said:—

"'Mary, you have prepared me to die, now you must go home and do the same for your poor mother.'

"These brief words revealed a world of meaning. She had not been sitting at his side in helpless pain, looking with fearful eyes into the dreary future when she should be alone and dependent with her child in a cold, selfish world. Forgetting her own heart-break, she had been untiring in her efforts to brighten his pathway down into the dark valley with the hope of heaven. God had blessed her angel work, for he seemed a Christian. I went away from that bedside more awed than if I had come from the presence of a king.

"Early one morning I was hastily summoned to the ward. It was crowded and confused. The last hours had now come. The artery had broken away beyond remedy, and from the ghastly wound the poor man's life-blood poured away in torrents, crimsoning the floor far and near. His face was pale and wild, for death had come at last in an awful form. In mistaken kindness they had kept his wife from him, fearing the effect of the scene upon her. Drawn by her frantic cries to the ward-master's room, I went and said to her—'My poor friend, you can go to your husband, but for his sake you must be perfectly calm. We can do nothing for him if he is ex-

cited.' For his sake, ah! yes, for his sake she could do anything, even master the whirlwind of sorrow at her heart. In a moment she became as quiet and gentle as a lamb, and crept noiselessly to his side. The man rallied and lived a short time, and husband and wife were left alone. We may well draw the veil over that last solemn farewell.

"For a brief space the pair sat on the shores of time, the extreme cape and promontory of life. All around rolled the ocean of eternity. Then one went forward into the unknown, and the curtain between the two worlds fell. In wild agony she clasped his lifeless form. The ward-master sought tenderly to lift her and lead her away. For a moment the tempest in her soul found expression and she sprang upon him like a tigress. Then came again the strange, unnatural calm like that when the Master said, 'Peace, be still!' Quietly, thoughtfully she made all her arrangements and soon went northward to her dying mother, taking the precious dust of him she had loved with her, and we saw her no more. But her sad, pale, patient face will haunt me through life.

"If all the bits of romance in these hospitals were gathered up they would make volumes. I will instance only two cases.

"It is somewhat common to get shot now, and yet for all that it is none the less rather a painful and tragical experience. Well, two of our soldiers were shot; one had his arm taken off, and the other lost an arm and a leg also. They both wrote to their respective fair ones, expressing the fear that they would no longer wish to unite themselves with such mutilated specimens of humanity, and if such were their feelings they were free. The female engaged to the man who had lost an arm availed herself of his release. She could not think of marrying him under such circumstances. The blow was fatal to the poor fellow. He became hopelessly deranged, and is now in the asylum in this city. Still, considering her character, perhaps he escaped a worse fate.

"The lady engaged to the soldier who had lost both his arm and leg replied that she honored him for his wounds;

that she loved him all the more for his patriotism and the heroism which led him to incur them; and that if he would permit her she would come on, and take care of him. She did so, and married him."

One turns with a feeling of relief, after the harrowing details in the letters already given, to this account of the Christmas festivities at Hampton Hospital.

"We are told that 'the desert shall blossom as the rose.' We believe it, for even the hospital—the house of disease and wounds, the spot ever shadowed by the wings of the dark angel—even this place of sombre associations can wreathe itself in festive garlands and resound with songs. Doctor McClellan, surgeon in charge, has the enlightened opinion that pills and physics are not the only health-restoring influences that can be brought to bear upon his patients. All efforts to celebrate the holidays with spirit have received his hearty sympathy and cooperation. The joyous season, so full of happy memories, has not passed in dull monotony. Though winds blew high and cold, still, throughout Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the axes rang merrily in the woods. Huge masses of holly, cedar, and pine might be seen moving toward the different wards, and approaching near you would find a nurse or convalescent staggering along beneath the green and fragrant burden. Under the magic of many skilful hands the pliant boughts are soon tied and twisted into a thousand devices. Men with only one hand worked with the rest. Men possessing but a single leg were busy as the others. Thump, thump, over the floor go the crutches, as old battered veterans hobbled about in all directions, to view in different lights the artistic and fantastic results of their labors. Even the dull face of chronic pain lights up and wanly smiles, while dim eyes, fast closing on earthly scenes, gaze wistfully on the fragrant evergreens and query to themselves if they are to be the symbols of their memories at distant homes.

"But though many wards blossomed out into holiday garlands, the crowning glories of the kind were to be found in

Ward C. Quaint devices, hanging festoons, wreaths and shields and graceful arches, draped the place in varied beauties like the tapestry of old. which turned rough and gloomy apartments into warm and silken bowers. The feathery cedar, tasselled pine, and far-famed laurel formed the rich background for the bright berries of the Christmas holly which glistened like rubies set in emerald folds. Flags were looped across the stage, and the curtains in the rear also showed the stars and stripes. The hospital choir and glee-club had here prepared an entertainment most agreeable to the tastes of all. Their motto, a beautiful transparency, explains its character, 'We come with songs to greet you.' As darkness fell a throng surrounded every door. Up the high steps to the main entrance, an hour before the doors were opened, crowding, jostling hundreds gathered, seeming like a human wave lifted by some powerful impulse from the sea of heads below. Around the building in circling eddies, knots of men sauntered talking, wondering, and anticipating concerning the pleasures of the evening. Above the swaying masses numerous crutches might be seen. Thus raised aloft they seemed like standards, showing well the spirit of our soldiers. It is not in wounds to keep them at home. If they have the sad misfortune not to have two legs beneath them, they are sure to go on one if anything unusual calls them out. Within, now, the lamps are lighted, down the long and echoing ward, and through the festoons and glistening arches, they wink and twinkle like fireflies in a cedar forest. The doors are opened and, under Doctor McClellan's wise and careful supervision, at least a thousand persons are soon admitted and seated. Those not so fortunate as to get seats fill every space of standing room. The hall is full, and those who cannot gain admittance crowd around outside the windows, where faces gleam in the fitful light, like framed and grotesque pictures.

"At a given signal the orchestra commenced, and the hum and buzz of many voices died away like a breeze in the forest. But it is useless to attempt to describe music—songs and an-

thems that seem like living spirits which by powerful spells may be called up to float and pass before you, and stir the soul with magic influences. It was no rude affair. Ears that have been educated at the Academy of Music would have tingled with novel and delightful sensations, could they have heard those deep, rich soldiers' voices accompanied by our lady nurses, and the lady teachers of the Tyler House, chanting our national anthems, or exciting irresistible mirth by their comic songs. Mr. Tilden's ripe, powerful, mellow voice moved every heart, and more than satisfied the nicest and most critical ear. Mr. George Terry, changeful as an April day, now convulsed the audience with laughter, and again, a moment afterward, caused all eyes to overflow. Mrs. Meachann, Miss Eastman, Mr. Sears, and Mr. Allen sustained their parts with marked ability, and little Miss Mary White brought down the house by singing a ballad whose simple beauty was universally appreciated. But where all perfectly performed the parts assigned to them, it is almost invidious to make distinctions. Mr. Metcalf, the leader of the choir, must have been satisfied with the performances, as certainly all others were. 'Home, Sweet Home,' closed the entertainment, and carried us all back to that dear and never-to-be-forgotten place. Again in fancy we gathered around the familiar hearthstone, made warm and bright by blazing fire and sweet memories of other days. God grant that another Christmas day may find us all there.

"But in the hospital there were hundreds confined by sickness, wounds, and weakness to their beds. However good their will may have been they were physically unable to join with their more fortunate companions in outside enjoyments. They were not forgotten or neglected. On Sabbath afternoon the choir again assembled, and commencing with Ward One, we passed through fourteen wards, making the old walls ring again with Christmas anthems. This, with wishing the patients a merry Christmas, and that another return of the happy day might find them all safe at home, and the reading, in Luke ii., of the angelic announcement to the

shepherds of the 'unspeakable gift' to us all, constituted the simple service. On Monday there was much high feeding. Sleek cattle and corpulent pigs were roasted whole, and there was a powerful mortality in the hospital poultry-yard. Men who could never carve their fortunes showed wonderful ability in carving turkey. These substantial luxuries, seasoned by the recent victories, made for us a royal feast, to which the sovereigns in blue sat down with unmingled satisfaction."

CHAPTER VI

THE HOSPITAL FARM AND CHAPEL

IN a letter to the Hon. William Cullen Bryant, then editor of the "Evening Post," Edward gives an account of the establishment of his hospital farm, and tells of its benefit to the men under his care.

"Hon. William C. Bryant—Dear Sir: The meeting in behalf of 'New York's disabled soldiers' has deeply interested me and awakened many war memories. During the last two years of the Rebellion I had some experience, in a small way, which may suggest useful features in a Soldiers' Home. At that time I was one of the chaplains of the Fortress Monroe hospitals, and the campaigns in the vicinity of Petersburg and Richmond often filled our long barracks to repletion and also covered the adjacent acres with temporary tent wards. Lying around the hospital there was an abundance of idle and unfenced land. With the sanction of Doctor McClellan, the surgeon in charge, I had this enclosed and planted with such vegetables as were most useful and conducive to health, the odorous onion taking the lead. The tulip mania had its day, but the weakness of average humanity for this bulb is as old as history—see Numbers xi., 5—and apparently it is only growing more prevalent with the ages. If this is evolution in the wrong direction Mr. Huxley should look after it.

"The labor of the hospital farm was performed by the patients themselves, and very many soon became deeply interested in their tasks. When a man became so far convalescent from illness or wounds as to be able to do a little work,

he was detailed for the garden and employed in its lighter labors. As he grew stronger he was put at heavier work. Heroes who had lost arms and legs supplemented each other's deficiencies, the two maimed men contriving to do between them far more than many a stout fellow who now demands $1.50 a day. A man with one hand could sow seed and weed the growing vegetables, while his comrade hitched along on his crutch and vigorously hoed the ground between the rows. I sometimes had as many as a hundred men at work, and I ever found that such tasks benefited body and soul. It did one's heart good to see pallid faces grow brown and ruddy, and flabby muscles round and hard. It did one more good thus easily to banish homesickness and the miserable incubus of *ennui* from which the sufferer is prone to seek relief in some form of vicious excitement. For the satisfaction of those who ask for more practical results I can state that we were able to send green vegetables to the hospital kitchens by the wagonload. As the record of the second year at the farm, made at the time, I find among other items the following: 700 bushels of snap beans in the pod, 120 do. lima beans, 130 do. carrots, 125 do. peas, 470 do. potatoes, 250 do. tomatoes, 1,500 bunches of green onions, 30,000 heads of cabbage, 26,900 ears of sweet corn, 2,5000 muskmelons, etc. A large poultry yard, enclosing four acres, was also built, and many other improvements made, all being accomplished by the willing labor of the convalescents themselves, who more rapidly regained their strength while thus furnishing the means of health to those still confined within the walls.

"Recalling these facts I am greatly pleased to learn that the 'New York Home' is to be located on a farm, for thus it may be made a *home* in reality. Providence put the first man into a garden, and few men have lived since who have not felt more at home when a garden lay about the door."

During the years that Edward was at Hampton Hospital, his friend Mr. Merwin was doing a noble work among the soldiers in the hospitals at the front, under the direction of the Christian Commission. My brother at one time wished

to be relieved of his duties as chaplain for several weeks, and Mr. Merwin kindly consented to take his place. He afterwards wrote of this time:—

"I found that Edward's presence among the sick and wounded was sadly missed, and that he had labored in many ways to contribute to their comfort and happiness. He brought from the North an experienced farmer and supplied the hospital with an abundance of excellent vegetables. Subsequently a church was erected by his efforts for the growing needs of that post."

While absent at the North my brother raised most of the funds necessary to build this chapel at Hampton. When he revisited the place years afterward, he found the chapel still in use. He was gratified also to learn that the hospital library continued to be of service. He says:

"Some of us rode out to the former site of the hospital. Many pleasant changes have occurred. The acres of ground occupied by sick and wounded men are now covered with orchards and the homes of peaceful industry. The hospital garden has in part become the grounds of a college for freedmen, and is in a high state of cultivation. The college itself is a fine building, and under the able, energetic administration of General Armstrong, is full of promise for the race that we have so long kept in ignorance. He is teaching them many things of vital use, and among these one of the most important is a wise, economical culture of the ground. The chapel to which we have referred is inclosed within the cemetery grounds, and only needs a few repairs now and then, to preserve it a substantial church for many years to come. I was told that there had been religious services in it nearly every Sabbath since the war.

"The soldiers' monument, now seen for the first time, impressed me most favorably. In its severe simplicity it truthfully commemorates the lives and characters of those who sleep beneath. Over three hundred dollars was given to me by the soldiers in twenty-five and fifty cent stamps and one-dollar bills, and with some these gifts were almost like the

widow's mite—all they had. It was most gratifying to see how nobly their wish and purpose had been carried out. That it has been so is due to that friend of the soldier and of all humanity, Miss D. L. Dix, who to the mites of the hospital patients added thousands of dollars collected elsewhere."

From another letter I take Edward's description of the chapel.

"The building is cruciform in its shape, and at the foot rises a light and graceful tower and spire, sixty feet high, surmounted by a cross showing each way. The style of architecture is Gothic. The chapel-room is thirty feet by sixty, with a high, arched ceiling. It is beautifully and smoothly plastered, and whitened with a hard finish. Two aisles run down the room, thus making three tiers of seats. These are somewhat Gothic in their form, and are stained black-walnut, surmounted by a white round moulding, which makes a pleasing contrast. In the place where the head of the cross should have been, there is merely a small projection from the main building, forming in the large chapel-room an alcove or recess. A beautiful Gothic frame containing two medium-sized and one large window of stained glass forms the rear of this projection, and aids in lighting the room. All the windows in the chapel part are of stained glass, and they render the light very soft and pleasant. I found them about as cheap as curtains, and much more pretty and durable. The space in the alcove is occupied by a slightly raised platform and a plain, simple pulpit still lacking a cushion. It is a very easy room to speak in, and in it music sounds remarkably well. The left arm of the cross, towards the hospital, constitutes the library, and is a large, airy room, thirty feet by twenty-four, furnished with tables, book-shelves, and reading-desks. Our collection of books is said to be one of the finest in the hospital service. Here also will be found the magazines, dailies, and weeklies, and prominent among our files will be 'The Evangelist.' The right arm of the cross consists of four small but pleasant rooms, and will now be used as the chaplain's quarters, and at some future time as a parsonage.

"The building is of a dark color, with white doors and window-frames. Around the entire structure has been built a rustic Gothic fence, constructed of smooth pine poles, and forming a heart-shaped enclosure. Therefore we have the following device: the church in the centre of the heart."

Soon after Edward's return from the North to his work at the hospital there was a marked revival of religion among the sick and wounded men. He says:—

"I think the most marked feature of the revival is the reclamation of those who have gone astray—who have found the temptations of camp life too powerful to be resisted. Since I have been in the service I have met hundreds of soldiers who acknowledged that they had been professors of religion at home. They had entered the army with the best of intentions, but the lack of Sabbath privileges, of the sacred influences of the hearth, and all the numberless aids which bolster up a church member at the North, together with the strong and positive allurements to sin in the field, had discovered to them their weakness and they had fallen. But in most cases it would seem that the old vital spark still smouldered at the bottom of their hearts. According to their own confessions, they are restless and dissatisfied, and unable to attain to the stolid or reckless apathy of those who have never tasted of the heavenly manna. Put them under the influence of an earnest prayer-meeting or faithful sermon, and they are like old rheumatic flies in an April sun, or the apparently dead and leafless trees in the warm breath of spring, or the veteran soldier who hears the familiar call to arms after years of ignoble peace. It is very interesting to watch them in our meetings. The first evening they take seats far back, and look around with an uneasy air, as if almost ashamed to be seen. The next evening they sit near the leader. They soon venture to respond faintly to some of the more earnest prayers. At last, unable to restrain the rising tide of feeling, they rise up, and often with tears and penitence confess their backslidings, resolve to be faithful hereafter, and ask the prayers of all present that

they may never be so weak as to wander again. They then take their places among those whom I call the fighting part of the congregation—those whose active aid I can rely upon.

"In one of the wards, where 'the straightforward Christian' (as I call him) is on duty, they are having a little revival by themselves. He gives its inmates no peace till they become Christians in self-defence. During the beautiful moonlight nights of last month, he organized a little prayer-meeting, which met on the banks of an arm of the bay that runs up into the mainland near the ward, and there claimed and verified the promise of 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'

"God does seem near the soldiers, and the soldiers as a general thing are ready to respond to His gracious invitations, not only here but elsewhere, and in fact in every place where Christians are willing to come down, or rather up to their level, and work among them with a genuine, heartfelt sympathy.

"In a recent letter from the front, my brother, Rev. Alfred C. Roe, Chaplain 104th N. Y. V., writes: 'We have weekly and almost daily conversions. Our prayer-meetings, though held in the trenches, and often in close proximity to the enemy, are largely attended, and unless prevented by important business the colonel is always present. The staff at headquarters is like a Christian family.'

"I have found by experience that the formal presentation of Gospel truth once a week by an officer in chaplain's uniform, or in any other, does not amount to much, unless faithfully followed up by personal effort and the social prayer-meeting. The religion of our Saviour, presented in the spirit of our Saviour, rarely fails to move even the rough soldier. I have found a most efficient colaborer in Chaplain Billingsly, also in Chaplain Raymond."

CHAPTER VII

PASTORATE AT HIGHLAND FALLS

SOON after the close of the war Edward accepted a call to the little church at Highland Falls, about a mile below West Point. This was his only charge, and here he spent nine happy, useful years. His first impressions of the church and congregation may be gathered from the following letter.

" I found myself in a true orthodox Presbyterian church, for although the thermometer stood far below zero and the roads were snowy and unbroken, still the number of ladies present far exceeded that of the gentlemen. I regarded this fact as a good omen, for if a pastor can depend upon a few strong-hearted women (not strong-minded in the cant sense of the phrase), he has only to go forward prudently to certain success. Summing up the entire congregation, small and great, it nearly made that number so well known, alas, in country churches, which is appropriately termed 'a handful.'

"These good people were thinly scattered over a plain little audience room that would seat comfortably one hundred and twenty. The church was bitter cold, and the situation of the pulpit, between the two doors, seemed designed to chill anything like enthusiasm on the part of the speaker. The construction of the building bore evidence that some architect of the olden time determined to achieve celebrity, in that he placed its back toward the street and faced it toward nothing in particular. This, with minor eccentricities, really entitled the edifice to the antiquarian's attention. But I intend not a disrespectful word against the little church, for

precious souls have been gathered there and trained for heaven."

It was in February that Edward received a unanimous call to this church, and from that time he gave himself up to the work of collecting funds for the erection of a new building. The majority of the people were not wealthy and many of them were very poor, but they did all they possibly could, many giving at the cost of great personal sacrifice. The brunt of the enterprise, however, necessarily fell upon my brother. About this time he began giving lectures on his experiences in the Civil War, often travelling many miles to deliver them, going wherever there was a chance to make money and so help forward his cherished object. He also obtained large sums from wealthy city churches and from friends, through personal solicitation.

At the end of two years Edward and his co-workers felt justified in laying the corner-stone of the new church. Here is his description of the ceremony.

"Patient effort seldom fails of its reward, and the day we had long toiled and prayed for, when we could lay the corner-stone of our new church, at length arrived. The 16th of September dawned, cloudy and dubious, like the commencement of the enterprise. The morning hours brought disappointment and heavy rain, as the two long years of work and waiting had brought many discouragements. Rev. Dr. William Adams of New York, who was to have made the address, was unavoidably detained; and the skies frowned so darkly it was thought best to defer the ceremony. But before the hour appointed there was a general brightening up. The clouds broke away and vanished over Crow Nest and the adjoining mountains. The sun smiled out in irresistible invitation and the people gathered in such numbers that it was thought best to go forward with the ceremony. This we were most anxious to do, as the North River Presbytery had honored our church as the place of its Fall meeting, and most of its members could upon this day be present with us.

"As the shadows were lengthening eastward, we gathered

among the evergreens that surround the solid foundation of the new edifice. It was just such a gathering as we love to see at a church—representatives from every age and class in the community. Little barefooted urchins climbed up into the cedars and looked on with wondering eyes. All right! the church is as truly for them as for the President, should he honor us with a visit. In a huge block of granite at the northeast corner of the building a receptacle had been cut. Around this we gathered. The Hon. John Bigelow, our former Minister to France, commenced the simple ceremony with a very happy address. In simple periods of classic beauty he spoke of church edifices as the highest and most disinterested expressions of the benevolence and culture of a community; and in words that were good omens of the future he dwelt upon the beneficent influences flowing therefrom. The Pastor next came forward, and stated that a copy of the Scriptures *only,* as published by the American Bible Society, would be deposited in the stone. In this solemn and emblematic act we wished to leave out everything that would take from the simplicity and force of the figure. God's Word alone in its purity should underlie the material structure, and so we hoped His Word alone, unmixed and undistorted by human opinions, would be the foundation of the spiritual church that should be built there in coming years. Therefore no papers, coins, or records of any kind, were placed in the sealed box with the Bible. If after the lapse of centuries this solid wall were taken down, this solitary Bible, unmarred by pen or pencil, will be a clearer record than long and formal documents, of a church that sought to honor God, and not man, and to keep His name before the people, and not that of some human instrument. With the usual words the massy block of granite was lowered to its place, and, humanly speaking, generations will pass away before these leaves again are turned.

"The Rev. Dr. Wheeler of Poughkeepsie, who kindly offered to act in Dr. Adams's place, spoke in a vein of strong original eloquence which chained the attention of all for a

brief time. As an impromptu effort it was singularly appropriate and hope-inspiring. He closed with a prayer, in the fervor of which a lady said that she could almost see the walls and spire rising to beautiful and entire completion. Rev. Mr. Teal of Cornwall pronounced the benediction, and thus closed the ceremony.

"We are building of the blue granite found in abundance upon the ground. The walls rise from the rocky foundation in massive thickness of plain, hammer-dressed stone, and thus are in keeping with the rugged mountain scenery. Time will rather strengthen the work than weaken it. We build from the rock with the rock, and trust that the great Spiritual Rock will underlie it all.

"It will cost us twenty thousand dollars to complete the church, and of this sum we have on hand, or promised, nearly half. The building is under contract to be finished the first of June next, and whatever indebtedness there exists will be provided for by a mortgage. The ladies of the church and the Sabbath-school children have pledged themselves by fairs and concerts to provide for the interest of the debt until the principal is paid. The people are proving that they are in earnest by their deeds. By their hearty sympathy and co-operation, Mr. Cozzens, the proprietor of the hotel, and his lady have greatly contributed to our success.

"The guests of the house have been very liberal and attentive, and show an increasing interest in the enterprise. At a time of hesitancy and doubt a generous gift of five hundred dollars, from C. K. Garrison, Esq., of New York, soon after followed by five hundred dollars more from Richard Schell, Esq., enabled us to go forward with hope and confidence. Mr. Garrison is a native of our region, and happy would it be for the country if, following his example, those who have won wealth and distinction abroad would return and enrich their birthplace by such noble proofs of their benevolence. Monuments of this kind perpetuate one's name better than tombstones. Among the summer worshippers at our little church under the trees, we have been glad to rec-

ognize so long the kindly face of Rev. J. G. Craighead of the 'Evangelist,' and long and gratefully will our people remember his words from the pulpit and in the social meeting. Rev. Dr. Robinson of Harrisburgh, Pa., has also been one of our summer residents, and one that we shall soon sadly miss."

Four years longer minister and people worked unceasingly in the interests of their new church, my brother continuing to give his lectures wherever opportunity offered. One delivered at Providence, Rhode Island, was quoted at some length in a daily paper of that city, and is here reprinted.

"The Rev. E. P. Roe, of West Point, lectured last night before a fair audience, at Harrington's Opera House, under the auspices of Prescott Post No 1, G. A. R., on 'Secret Service at the Front; or Scouting and Guerillas.' During the war, said the speaker, the northern people regarded guerillas as irresponsible bands of outlaws, living by violence and plunder, and while leaning to and assisting the rebels, ready to murder and rob without much regard for either side. The majority of the guerillas were, no doubt, as bad as generally supposed, but there were among them trusty and intelligent scouts, whose employment was to trace out the position and movements of the Union army, and who, no matter how much robbing and murdering they might do on their own account, never lost sight of the main object of their service. The acuteness of these scouts and the various disguises which they assumed were more than surprising. As a division of the Union army passed along, an old citizen might have been seen building a rail fence. Surely that ancient-looking farmer knows nothing, the passing troops would readily think. But under that old felt hat gleamed a watchful eye and listened attentive ears, observing and hearing everything worthy of remark. As soon as the army passed, he throws down his rails and slips off to the swamp, mounts a fleet horse, and soon the numbers, destination and condition of the Union division are reported at the nearest rebel headquar-

ters. Sometimes the woods on both sides of the marching column swarmed with prowling guerillas; sometimes an affable stranger in Union colors would approach, enter into conversation with the weary straggler, gain all the information he could, and then shoot down his informant. They were very bold in their operations. One day an orderly was riding with important despatches far within the Union lines, when he was startled by a mounted rebel, who made his appearance from the woodside, and who, presenting a pistol at his breast, demanded his arms and despatches. After, as he imagined, cleaning out the orderly, the rebel invited him to come along and accept a little Southern hospitality. The scout rode a little forward, and as he did so, a quiet grin played stealthfully over his furious countenance; a little pistol was withdrawn from a side pocket, the cold muzzle applied to the rebel's ear, and in a few moments the rebel was disarmed and on his way to a Northern prison. But the bold deeds of the rebels in scouting through the Union lines paled before the achievements of General Sharpe and his bureau of military information. The promotion of this bureau was recommended by General Butterfield to General Hooper, in 1863, for the purpose of ascertaining the numbers, positions, and intentions of the enemy. To this bureau was gathered all the information of the signal corps and of the hundreds of scouts and spies who traversed the rebel army and country. Trusty and intelligent men were picked from the rank and file of the army and placed under command of General Sharpe. The first piece of work undertaken by the general was to obtain a full roster of Lee's army as it lay on the Rappahannock, the numbers and titles of regiments and the names of the corps, division, brigade, regimental and company commanders. He picked out General Heath's brigade of A. P. Hill's corps as the first one to operate on, and by daringly scouting in person through the lines of that brigade, conversing with its pickets, and mingling with its men, he succeeded in obtaining not only a full list of its officers, and an accurate detail of its strength, but a correct description

of the personal appearance and habits of these officers. After mastering Heath's division he picked out an intelligent soldier whom he crammed with all he knew himself about the division, dressed him up in a rebel uniform, and sent him into another division of Hill's corps. Of course the man was at once apprehended and taken before a provost marshal, but made such a plain statement, giving the names of the officers of the regiments in Heath's division, to which he claimed to belong, and describing their personal appearance and habits with more accuracy than reverence, that he was dismissed, with a reprimand for his want of respect for his superior officers, and ordered to report back at once to his regiment. After looking around him and ascertaining everything worth noting with regard to the command, he returned to General Sharpe; and thus the particulars, as ascertained by every new scout, facilitated the means of getting more. At length Sharpe had a roster of the whole of Lee's army, and could tell its strength at any time within a thousand or so, that thousand being the changing mass of stragglers, furloughed, and sick, to whom no special location could be assigned. He could also tell the name of every officer in that army, and rebel generals of divisions might have gone to him for information concerning their own subordinates. The great usefulness of thus possessing the precise knowledge of the strength and formation of the enemy's forces was particularly illustrated at Gettysburg, where the anxious spirits of the Union commanders were relieved by ascertaining from General Sharpe that every brigade but one of Lee's army had been engaged in the fight, and that that general had no reserve with which to follow success or break defeat. Not least among the resources from which valuable information was obtained were the contrabands, whose fidelity and truthfulness were remarkable, considering their want of education, and consequent lack of intelligence.

"Amusing and interesting instances were given by the speaker of the hairbreadth escapes and reckless daring of General Sharpe's scouts, and he concluded an entertaining

discourse by paying a hearty and well-deserved tribute to their patriotic and fearless devotion, to which was greatly owing, in his opinion, the winning of some of our greatest victories, and the fortunate issue of the war itself."

In 1868 the church was completed, a building "whose granite walls are so thick, and hard-wood finish so substantial, that passing centuries should add only the mellowness of age." Edward would not allow his name deposited in the corner-stone, as many wished, but since his death a bronze tablet, with the following inscription, has been placed in the vestibule.

In Memoriam,
Rev. Edward Payson Roe,
Minister of the
First Presbyterian Ch. of the Highlands.
1866–1875.
Author, Pastor, Friend,
This Building Stands the Monument of
His Earnest Labors.
Erected:
1868.

After the completion of the church the old parsonage was enlarged and remodelled, and so during his pastorate thirty thousand dollars were raised and expended in permanent improvements.

While living at Highland Falls Edward continually met the officers and soldiers of West Point. A soldier at one time was the leader of his choir, in which was also a quartet from the military band. He writes as follows of a mountain camp at West Point which recalled some of his own army life:—

"About the middle of August the Cadet Corps left their airy tent villas on the plain at West Point, and took up their line of march for the mountains. The pioneers had preceded, and the road was practicable not only for infantry, but for carriages and stages laden with fair ladies from the hotels. The selected camping ground, though rough indeed compared with the velvet lawns of West Point, was admirably

adapted for the purpose. It was a broken, uneven field, on the property of T. Cozzens, Esq. Here in the midst of the wildest mountain scenery the young soldiers experienced, to quite an extent, the realities of life at the front, minus the element of danger. But the mimicry was almost perfect, and so suggestive of bygone days to an old campaigner, that I cannot refrain from indulging in a brief description.

"A wild, romantic drive of three or four miles through winding valleys, jagged boulders and ledges, and overshadowing trees, brought us to the edge of the camp-ground. Along the road ran the familiar military telegraph, the wire now looped up to a convenient tree, now sustained by the slender portable pole that bends but never breaks beneath the seemingly gossamer strand. Just before reaching the place we struck off upon one of those temporary roads that we were ever extemporizing in Virginia. First we saw the white tents through the foliage, then the gleaming of a sentry's musket, the cover of an ambulance, and in a moment more we were in the midst of the encampment, and the spell was complete. Through the strong laws of association the old life rushed back again, and what often seems a far-away dream was as present and real as six years ago. But apart from all its suggestiveness to those who dwelt in canvas cities and engaged in war's realities, the scene was novel, beautiful, and deeply interesting. Here in the midst of the wooded highlands was a fac-simile, reproduced in miniature, of thousands of encampments, created by the Rebellion, in the equally wild regions of the Southern States. Here were our future generals learning to apply practically to the roughness of nature the principles and tactics that might seem comparatively easy on paper or grassy plain. Sloping down to the right, the encampment bordered on Round Pond, a beautiful, transparent little lake, fringed with water-lilies, and mirroring back the rocks and foliage of its rugged banks. Through the courtesy of Mr. Cozzens, we and others were soon skimming its surface in an airy little pleasure boat. A quarter of a mile to the left, in full view, with a descent of

a hundred feet, Long Pond glistened in the bright August sun. All around rose the green billowy hills as far as the eye could reach. We had hardly noted this beautiful commingling of wood and water before the stirring notes of the drum announced skirmish drill. On each side of the camp a squad marched briskly out, and was soon lost in the forest. Soon from its unseen depths there came a shot, then another, then several, ending in a rapid, scattering fire, and I was back again on the skirmish line in Virginia. By this time the other detachment had reached position, and were 'popping' away in the old familiar style. The hills caught up the reports and echoed them down again multiplied a hundredfold.

> "'Rock, glen, and cavern paid them back;
> To many mingled sounds at once,
> The awakened mountain gave response;'

and these regions of silvan peace and solitude were disturbed as they never had been since the days when Washington made West Point his military base, and Fort Putnam was the chief Highland stronghold.

"On a high eminence to the right fluttered a signal flag. I shall never forget the last time that my special attention was called to that very significant object. It was on a bold ledge of the Blue Ridge west of Culpeper, Va. We were out on picket, lounging away a long bright October afternoon, when in the far distance a white flutter like that of a lady's handkerchief caught the wary eye of the colonel. Listlessness vanished. All glasses were out, but practiced eyes discovered, not a token of ladies' favor, but a signal of stern war. Lee was turning our right flank, and then followed the famous race for Centreville heights.

"But the sun had sunk behind a blue Highland, and the tap of the drum announcing parade recalled from reminiscences of the past. Creaking, groaning, crunching up the rough road came stages, carriages, and wagons of all descriptions laden with fair ladies, who in bright summer costumes

seemed airy indeed, but from the looks of the jaded horses, were anything but thistle-downs. The wild mountain camp was soon brilliant with Fifth Avenue toilets. There was a general 'presenting of arms,' though not with belligerent aspect, and it required no astrologer to predict a conjunction of Mars and Venus. Old fogy that I was, recalling the days of our humdrum soldiering long and well gone by, here I was in the midst of a brilliant active campaign, where wounds were given and received, human hearts pierced to the very circumference—perhaps deeper sometimes. Yon tall, soldierly figure of the commandant is a secondary one here. Cupid is the field marshal of the day. With the near approach of night there was a suspension of hostilities. The fair invaders gradually drew off their attacking forces, and soon were lost in the deeper shadows that lay at the mountain base. The next morning at 8 A.M., the Cadet Corps returned to their encampment on the plain at West Point."

My brother's attitude toward West Point is clearly shown in the following vigorous defence of the National Academy which was published in the "Evangelist."

"The Military Academy here has lately had an unenviable degree of notoriety and of severe criticism. Some go so far as to advise the breaking up of the entire institution. No one so thought when the gallant Reynolds at the cost of his life made such vigorous battle at Gettysburg as to check Lee, and secure to us a favorable position for fighting out the decisive conflict of the war. No one so advised when a graduate of West Point announced the surrender of Vicksburg; when another marched from Atlanta to the sea; and another swept down the Shenandoah Valley like a whirlwind. During our national struggle for life, trained soldiers did for us what educated lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and statesmen do for a community at all times. Next to the courage and patriotism of the people, we have to thank the skill of West Point, that we are One Nation to-day.

"There are those who advocate State military schools, in other words that we have an army officered by men of local

interests and feelings. We shall then have generals to whom a single State is more than the whole Union. We shall have patriots educated by the New York ring, and the champions of Tammany Hall. No, the soldiers and sailors of the United States—as they are in the service of the whole country—should be educated by the whole country, and upon their maps State boundaries should be blotted out.

"Others advise, instead of this National Academy, that a course of military instruction be added to our colleges. But in this way students would only pick up a smattering of military science, in connection with a dozen other sciences, that would be quite useless in time of war. If we are to be fully armed against attack, we need men thoroughly educated in military science by the Nation, and therefore bound by every instinct of honor, gratitude, and association to defend her in her hour of peril.

"Does West Point now furnish such an education and such men? Yes, as truly as it ever has done; and I think it could be shown that it was never in better condition than it is this day. But what does the recent 'outrage' indicate, and what the 'persecution of Cadet Smith?' Living near the institution, and yet having no connection with it—nothing to gain or lose—I can form as correct and unprejudiced an opinion as those who base theirs upon partial, imperfect reports of isolated incidents. One needs but to visit the Point daily, or nightly, in order to see that perfect discipline is maintained. The 'outrage' referred to was the expelling of three students by the first class. This action no one defends. From no source have I heard it so severely condemned as by the officers themselves. If it could have been foreseen it would have been prevented. In the most quiet communities there are sudden outbreaks of passion and violence. Is the community where such an event occurs, and which goes on its orderly way the remaining three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, to be called 'lawless?' Is the hasty, passionate act of a few, wrong as it may be, to give character to all? Moreover, in judging acts we should consider the mo-

tives. In this case they throw much light on the action. The sentiment of the corps is one of intense disgust at the vice of lying. A cadet cannot commit a more serious offence against the received code of honor. The parties expelled were believed to have been guilty of this offence, and their dismissal was a sudden and lawless expression of the general anger and disgust. The action was contrary to the character of a soldier—the man of discipline and iron rules. But was it contrary to the character of frank, impulsive youth? Are those who have scarcely reached their majority to be judged in the same light as cool, gray-bearded veterans? I do not see how the officers are to blame because they could not foresee the trouble. Is a careful housekeeper 'reckless' because a kerosene lamp explodes? Do you say she ought to use non-explosive material? Then you must send sexagenarians to West Point instead of boys.

"The same principle applies to the 'persecution.' Critical editors, and advanced politicians like Ben. Butler, require of a class of young men gathered from every part of the land what they could scarcely obtain from the reformers of New England as a body. There is no use in ignoring the general and widespread prejudice of race. Many who grieve most at the wrongs of the colored people still feel that instinctive drawing back from social contact. Do those that condemn the young men most severely introduce the colored element largely into their own social circles? If not, then they should not be so ready to throw stones. Colored cadets sent to West Point must be treated in precisely the same way as the others. The law forms them all into a social community with equal rights. Is it to be expected that the utmost cordiality should be shown by hot-blooded, unformed, and often unwise youth, having in somewhat intenser form the same prejudices with those who condemn them? They have probably acted in the matter very much as the sons of the editors and ministers and reformers, who have been so severe upon them, would have acted in like circumstances. That happy day when the brotherhood of the race shall be honestly and

lovingly acknowledged I fear is yet far distant, nor is it to be hastened by attempting to force a social intercourse against which there may be a natural aversion. As far as the officers are concerned, I believe that they have tried to treat young Smith with strict impartiality, and to give him every opportunity. The affairs of the Academy seem to go forward like clock-work. Considering the sore and excited state of mind among the cadets, their order and subordination have been remarkable. Of course two hundred and fifty young men of the widest difference of character, brought together from every diversity of life, could not be expected to act like nicely adjusted machines; but with the exception of those two affairs, what has there been to justify the charges of 'lawlessness' or 'looseness of discipline?'

"In view of its services, it is strange that anyone should speak seriously of breaking up West Point. It has paid back to the nation all that has been spent upon it a hundredfold.

"P. S.—May I add a word in regard to the commandant of this post, who is the officer who has special care of the students in the Academy. Political attacks do not spare anybody, and during the recent troubles slurs have been thrown out even against General Upton. It has been intimated that fear of the authorities at Washington has made him overlenient and slack in his discipline toward the first class, as President Grant and others high in power have sons in this class.

"These disparaging remarks are made either by those who know nothing of General Upton's character and antecedents, or else they are the grossest slanders. Search the army through and it would be impossible to find a man more utterly devoid of the spirit that truckles to power. Nature never put into his composition the least spice of obsequiousness, and one has only to look into the man's face and hear him speak five words in order to know it. He belongs to that class of men who pay more attention to the poor and humble than to the high and haughty.

"I think my testimony in this matter is worth something. During nearly four years of life in the army, and five years' residence within one mile of the West Point Academy, I have met with a great many officers of the volunteer and regular service, and never has a man more thoroughly impressed me with the fact that he was a gentleman, and conscientious in duty even to the slightest particular, than General Upton. Moreover, he is an enthusiast in his profession, and therefore successful. He is the author of the Infantry Tactics now in use in our army, and said to be the finest in the world. From frequent intercourse with the Point, I know that he maintains a daily discipline among the cadets as nearly perfect as anything of the kind can be. It is my belief that investigation of the recent troubles will show that the institution was never better officered than at present.

"Moreover, General Upton is a sincere Christian—one that lives up to his profession. His influence in this respect is most marked and happy upon the corps. We cannot overestimate the importance of the fact that the officer directly in charge of the young men at the Point is guided in all respects, not only by strict military honor and duty, but by the highest Christian principle."

CHAPTER VIII

RESIGNATION FROM THE MINISTRY

WHILE at Highland Falls Edward wrote his first novel, "Barriers Burned Away." He had told of his plan for a story to be based upon the scenes he had witnessed among the ruins of the great Chicago fire, and when I received a letter from him the following winter asking me to make him a visit as soon as possible, I suspected that he wanted my opinion of what he had written. And I was not disappointed, for on the evening after my arrival he read to me a number of chapters, and we talked over his plan for the story until after midnight, he going over the outlines that he then had in mind, though he afterward made some changes. The next day he called upon Dr. Field, editor of the "Evangelist," and owing to his kind encouragement the visit was repeated, the result being that the story was finally accepted for serial publication in that paper.

From that time on, my brother read to me every one of his stories in manuscript, and I enjoyed them the more from the fact that in every case I recognized the originals from which he had drawn his scenes and characters, idealized as they were.

In 1874 his health had become so much impaired by overwork that his physician strongly urged him to give up either writing or preaching. After giving the matter serious consideration and consulting with friends whose advice he valued, my brother reluctantly decided to retire from the ministry. How his people parted with him is told in a let-

ter to the "Evangelist," whose readers had followed with so much interest and substantial aid my brother's efforts to build a new church.

"I have been very much surprised. Last Sabbath, the 7th of March, was my birthday. On the 6th I sat quietly in my study until the sun was behind the mountains, and then was sent out of the house on false pretences. The young people of the church were getting up an entertainment, and suddenly took it into their heads that they needed my assistance. There seemed many delays, but we at last got through. Then I received a startling message that a neighbor wished to see me immediately. Surmising sudden illness or trouble, I did not go home, but started off in great haste. I found not sickness, but mystery, at this neighbor's, which I could not fathom. My friend and his wife were unusually entertaining and I could not get away, though I knew I was keeping tea waiting at home. Finally there came another mysterious message—'Two gentlemen and two ladies wished to see me at the parsonage.' 'Oh, I understand now,' I thought. 'It is a wedding; but they are managing it rather oddly.'

"But imagine my surprise when I opened the door and found about one hundred and fifty people present. Well, to be brief, they just overwhelmed us with kindness. They gave us fine music, and provided a supper for five hundred instead of one hundred and fifty.

"Mrs. Roe thought that she was in the secret; but they surprised her also by presenting, with cordial words, a handsome sum of money at the close of the evening.

"My resignation has not yet been accepted, but we expect that the pastoral relation will be dissolved at the next meeting of Presbytery. As soon as spring comes in reality, and the embargo of ice and snow is over, we must be upon the wing; and this spontaneous and hearty proof of the friendliness of my people was very grateful to me. During the nine years of my pastorate they have been called to pass through many trying and difficult times. They have often

been asked to give beyond their means, and have often done so. With the very limited amount of wealth in the congregation, even the generous aid received from abroad and from visitors could not prevent the effort to erect a new church and parsonage from being an exceedingly heavy burden, involving perplexing and vexatious questions. When I remember how patiently they have borne these burdens, how hard many have worked, and how many instances of genuine self-denial there have been, I feel that too much cannot be said in their praise. It is my hope and my belief that they will deal as kindly with my successor as they have with me."

Dr. Edgar A. Mearns of the United States army was one of my brother's devoted friends who knew him intimately during the years of his ministry. In 1888, from Fort Snelling, Minn., he writes as follows:

"The sad news of the death of Rev. E. P. Roe, at Cornwall-on-Hudson, reached me to-day, and filled my heart with sadness. During the long years of my sojourn upon the western frontier, I have looked forward with unspeakable pleasure to the time when I could grasp the hand of this true friend, and walk and talk with him, and enjoy once more the society of his dear family. I had planned a leave of absence from my station in the desert-wilderness of Arizona for last spring, in response to his urgent invitations; but other duties awaited me, and I was not permitted to realize the fulfilment of this ardent desire. We were to walk through the woodlands, drive over the mountains, and sail on our native Hudson. I saw in mental vision the very rock under which we used to poke at the woodchucks with a stick, and on which we gathered the walking fern, and seemed once more to hear him discoursing of small fruits in his delightful garden, or reading to the family circle from his latest manuscripts. In the West many hearts have been pierced by this sorrow, for he made friends wherever he went.

"To write a word of the lost friend, who has been a very pillar of support in times of struggle or affliction, will perhaps relieve a pain at the heart which is hard to bear. It

is not as an author, justly celebrated, that I must speak of him, but of the private life of one who combined every attribute of mind and heart to endear him to his friends. I have known him as a pastor, laboring assiduously among the members of his flock, dispensing liberal charity among the poor, and lightening everybody's burden. He was a rock to lay hold of when other friendships were borne away by the cruel winds of adversity. Then it was that the genial warmth of his smile, the kindly hand-pressure, and the cheerful encouragement of his voice fettered sore hearts to his.

"I have seen him as a hero, struggling in the water and broken ice, bearing in his arms the bodies of children for whom he risked his life. He had heard a cry for help, and that alone was enough to enlist the sympathy and secure the highest sacrifice of which our nature is capable. Then, paying no heed to personal sickness and injury, he strove to comfort the bereaved hearts of mothers, whose boys were drowned, perhaps by exposure laying the seeds of the disease which recently caused his death.

"His zealous devotion to his calling, together with exposure to various hardships encountered on frequent lecturing tours made for the purpose of obtaining funds for the erection of a suitable church for his congregation, made such inroads into his naturally vigorous constitution that, having accomplished his task, he was compelled to resign his charge as pastor, after about nine years of faithful service. The beautiful stone Presbyterian church at Highland Falls is a monument to his untiring efforts."

CHAPTER IX

FRUIT CULTURE AND LITERARY WORK

AFTER my brother's resignation from the ministry, he bought a plain, old-fashioned house with considerable ground about it, at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, two miles distant from his childhood home, and went there to live.

It soon became evident, however, that Edward could not depend upon his literary work alone for the support of his growing family. He had for some years taken much interest in the cultivation of small fruits, and after the removal to Cornwall he carried on this work upon a larger scale, finding it profitable as well as interesting.

I remember the piles of letters that came to him each day for several years containing orders for plants. Although in general not a methodical man, yet the painstaking care which he was known to exercise in keeping the many varieties distinct enabled his customers to rely implicitly upon his statements as to the kind and value of the plants ordered. He often employed many men and boys on his place, but always engaged them with the understanding that if through carelessness the varieties of plants became mixed the offender was to be dismissed at once, and a few examples soon taught his assistants that he meant what he said. But when they were faithful to their duty, they invariably found him considerate and kind.

The strawberry was Edward's favorite among the small fruits, and he made many experiments with new varieties. When the vines were bearing, sometimes as many as forty bushels of berries were picked in a single day. Some of

them were of mammoth size. I remember, on one occasion, we took from a basket four berries which filled to the brim a large coffee-cup, and notwithstanding their enormous size they were solid and sweet. During this period he wrote the articles on "Success with Small Fruits," published in "Scribner's Magazine."

Currants came next in his favor. Writing of them he says: "Let me recommend the currant cure. If any one is languid, depressed in spirits, inclined to headaches, and generally 'out of sorts,' let him finish his breakfast daily for a month with a dish of freshly picked currants. He will soon doubt his own identity, and may even think that he is becoming a good man. In brief, the truth of the ancient pun will be verified, 'That the power to live a good life depends largely upon the liver.' Let it be taught at the theological seminaries that the currant is a means of grace. It is a corrective, and that is what average humanity most needs."

Mr. Charles Downing of Newburgh, a noted horticulturist, was Edward's valued friend. He was especially successful in fruit culture, and it was his custom to forward to my brother for trial novelties sent to him from every part of the country. Then on pleasant summer afternoons the old gentleman would visit my brother, and, side by side, they would compare the much-heralded strangers with the standard varieties. Often forty or fifty kinds were bearing under precisely the same conditions. The two lovers of Nature thus gained knowledge of many of her secrets.

Edward's coming to live in Cornwall was a source of great pleasure to our father, who, although then past eighty years of age, was still vigorous, and as full of enthusiasm for his garden as when he first moved to the country. Often on summer mornings, before the sun was fairly above the eastern mountains, father would drive over to my brother's, taking in his phaeton a basket of fruit or vegetables that he believed were earlier than any in my brother's garden. These he would leave at the front door for Edward to discover when he came downstairs, and return in time for our breakfast.

He would laugh with the keenest enjoyment if he found that his beans or sweet corn had ripened first. Frequently he would remain at his son's house for breakfast, and afterward the two would wander together over the grounds while the dew was still fresh upon the fruit and flowers. Many of the rosebushes and shrubs had been transplanted from the old garden, and it delighted my father and brother to see that they were flourishing and blooming in their new environment.

When Edward first moved to Cornwall several newspapers severely criticised him for giving up the ministry to write novels. I was sitting with him alone in his library one day when such a criticism came to him through the mail. After reading it he handed it quietly to me, went to his desk and took down a bundle of letters, saying: "These are mostly from young men, not one of whom I know, who have written to me of the benefit received from my books." He then read to me some of those touching letters of confession and thanks for his inspiring help to a better life.

When he finished reading the letters he said: "I know my books are read by thousands; my voice reached at most but a few hundred. I believe many who would never think of writing to me such letters as these are also helped. Do you think I have made a mistake? My object in writing, as in preaching, is to do good, and the question is, Which can I do best? I think with the pen, and I shall go on writing, no matter what the critics say."

Still his name was retained on the rolls of the North River Presbytery, and he was always ready to preach when needed, especially in neglected districts. For a long time after father's death he kept up the little Sunday-school that had been father's special care.

His home commanded a fine view of the river and mountains, and he would watch with great delight the grand thunderstorms that so often sweep over the Highlands. I take this description of a storm from one of his letters:—

"This moist summer has given a rich, dark luxuriance to the foliage, that contrasts favorably to the parched, with-

ered aspect of everything last year. The oldest inhabitants (that class so sorely perplexed in this age of innovations) were astonished to learn that a sharp frost occurred in the mountains back of us, just before the Fourth. Even the seasons have caught the infection of the times, and no longer continue their usual jog-trot through the year, but indulge in the strangest extremes and freaks.

"A person living in the city can have little idea of thunderstorms as they occur in this mountain region. The hills about us, while they attract the electrified clouds, are also our protection, for, abounding in iron ore, they become huge lightning-rods above the houses and hamlets at their bases. But little recks old Bear Mountain, or Cro' Nest, Jove's most fiery bolts. The rocky splinters fly for a moment; some oak or chestnut comes quivering down; but soon the mosses, like kindly charity, have covered up the wounded rock, and three or four saplings have grown from the roots of the blighted tree.

"But the storm we witness from our safe and sheltered homes is often grand beyond description. At first, in the distant west, a cloud rises so dark that you can scarcely distinguish it from a blue highland. But a low muttering of thunder vibrates through the sultry air, and we know what is coming. Soon the afternoon sun is shaded, and a deep, unnatural twilight settles upon the landscape like the shadow of a great sorrow on a face that was smiling a moment before. The thunder grows heavier, like the rumble and roar of an approaching battle. The western arch of the sky is black as night. The eastern arch is bright and sunny, and as you glance from side to side, you cannot but think of those who, comparatively innocent and happy at first, cloud their lives in maturer years with evil and crime, and darken the future with the wrath of heaven. At last the vanguard of black flying clouds, disjointed, jagged, the rough skirmish line of the advancing storm, is over our heads. Back of these, in one dark, solid mass, comes the tempest. For a moment there is a sort of hush of expectation, like the lull

before a battle. The trees on the distant brow of a mountain are seen to toss and writhe, but as yet no sound is heard. Soon there is a faint, far-away rushing noise, the low, deep prelude of nature's grand musical discord that is to follow. There is a vivid flash, and a startling peal of thunder breaks forth overhead, and rolls away with countless reverberations among the hills. In the meantime the distant rushing sound has developed into an increasing roar. Half-way down the mountain-side the trees are swaying wildly. At the base stands a grove, motionless, expectant, like a square of infantry awaiting an impetuous cavalry charge. In a moment it comes. At first the shock seems terrible. Every branch bends low. Dead limbs rattle down like hail. Leaves, torn away, fly wildly through the air. But the sturdy trunks stand their ground, and the baffled tempest passes on. Mingling with the rush of the wind and reverberations of thunder, a new sound, a new part now enters into the grand harmony. At first it is a low, continuous roar, caused by the falling rain upon the leaves. It grows louder fast, like the pattering feet of a coming multitude. Then the great drops fall around, yards apart, like scattering shots. They grow closer, and soon a streaming torrent drives you to shelter. The next heavy peal is to the eastward, showing that the bulk of the shower is past. The roar of the thunder just dies away down the river. The thickly falling rain contracts your vision to a narrow circle, out of which Cozzens's great hotel and Bear Mountain loom vaguely. The flowers and shrubbery bend to the moisture with the air of one who stands and takes it. The steady, continuous plash upon the roof slackens into a quiet pattering of raindrops. The west is lightening up; by and by a long line of blue is seen above Cro' Nest. The setting sun shines out upon a purified and more beautiful landscape. Every leaf, every spear of grass is brilliant with gems of moisture. The cloud scenery has all changed. The sun is setting in unclouded splendor. Not the west but the east is now black with storm; but the rainbow, emblem of hope and God's mercy, spans its blackness,

and in the skies we again have suggested to us a life, once clouded and darkly threatened by evil, but now, through penitence and reform, ending in peace and beauty, God spanning the wrong of the past with His rich and varied promises of forgiveness. At last the skies are clear again. Along the eastern horizon the retreating storm sends up occasional flashes, that seem like regretful thoughts of the past. Then night comes on, cool, moonlit, breathless. Not a leaf stirs where an hour before the sturdiest limbs bent to the earth. This must be nature's commentary on the 'peace that passeth all understanding.' "

At this period Dr. Lyman Abbott made his permanent home in Cornwall, going almost daily to the city to attend to his duties as editor of the "Christian Union."

In a short article written for that paper my brother describes a drive taken over the mountains when Dr. Abbott was entertaining the Brooklyn Association of Congregational Ministers.

"Pleasures long planned and anticipated often prove 'flat, stale, and unprofitable' when at last they disappoint us in their sorry contrast with our hopes, while on the other hand good times that come unexpectedly are enjoyed all the more keenly because such agreeable surprises. The other morning the editor of the 'Christian Union,' Dr. Lyman Abbott, who is a near neighbor and a nearer friend, appeared at my door with the announcement that he was to meet on the morrow at the West Point landing the New York and Brooklyn Association of Congregational Ministers, at the same time giving me an invitation to accompany him, which I accepted on the spot. The morning of the 27th found us leading an array of carriages up the Cornwall slope of the mountain, for it had been arranged that the gentlemen whom Mr. and Mrs. Abbott were to entertain for the day should land at West Point and enjoy one of the finest drives in America across the Highlands, instead of a prosaic ride down from Newburgh through the brickyards. The Albany day boat was on time, and so were we, and there stepped on shore a

venerable body of divinity, or rather several bodies, led by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and his brother, Dr. Edward Beecher. A shower the previous evening had left less dust than could be found in the immaculate parlor of a spinster, and the heated air had been cooled to such a nicety of adjustment that we grew warm in the praise of its balminess. With much good-natured badinage and repartee we climbed the West Point hill and took the outer avenue that skirts the river edge of the plain and campus. 'The brethren' gazed with mild curiosity at 'Flirtation Walk' where it led demurely and openly from the main road, but soon lost itself in winding intricacies, mysterious copsewood, and the still deeper mysteries suggested by the imagination. Let no grave reader lift a disdainful nose. Perhaps this same secluded path of frivolous name has had a greater influence on human destiny than himself.

"The trim, plain and trimmer cadets were soon left far behind, and nature began to wear the aspect it had shown to our great-grandfathers when children. Through the skilful engineering of Mr. Charles Caldwell, a most excellent road of easy grades winds across Cro' Nest and Butter Hill (the latter was rechristened 'Storm King' some years since by the poet, N. P. Willis). As our path zigzagged up the shaggy sides of Cro' Nest, wider and superber views opened out before us, until at last West Point with its gleaming tents, the winding river with its silver sheen, and the village of Cold Spring lay at our feet, while to the southwest a multitude of green highlands lifted their crests like a confusion of emerald waves. A few moments more brought us to the summit, and although we were but a thousand feet nearer heaven than when we started, the air was so pure and sweet and the sky so blue that it might well seem to those who had so recently left the stifling city that they had climbed halfway thither. A half an hour's ride brought us to the northern slope of the mountains. Here we made a halt at Mr. Cobb's 'School on the Heights,' and were entertained with unlimited cherries, which, by some strange providence, had

escaped the boys, and also by some exceedingly interesting gymnastic exercises that were performed to the rhythm of gay music. There are probably few finer views on the river than that from Mr. Cobb's piazza and grounds, and thus his pupils are under the best of influences out of doors as well as within. As Mr. Abbott's guests looked down upon the broad expanse of Newburgh Bay, the city itself, the picturesque village of Cornwall, and the great swale of rich diversified country that lay between our lofty eyrie and the dim and distant Shawangunk Mountains that blended with the clouds, they must have felt indebted to their host for one of the richest pleasures of their lives.

"At last Mr. Beecher said that he carried an internal clock which plainly intimated that it was time for dinner. The *descensus* was easy, but Mrs. Abbott's warm welcome and hot dinner suggested an *avernus* only by blissful contrast. The fun, wit and jollity of the remainder of the evening can no more be reproduced than the sparkle of yesterday's dew or the ripple of yesterday's waves. It was a pleasant thing to see those gray-haired men, many of whom had been burdened with care more than half a century, becoming boy-like again in feeling and mirthfulness."

During Edward's residence in Cornwall, each year about the middle of June, when the roses and strawberries were in their prime, it was his custom to send an annual invitation to the Philolethean Club of clergymen in New York City to visit him for a day at his home. Dr. Howard Crosby, Dr. Lyman Abbott, Dr. Schaeffer, and many other well-known clergymen were members of this club. At these meetings the learned and dignified clergymen threw aside all formality and were like a company of college boys off for a frolic. Their keen wit, quick repartee, and droll stories at these times will never be forgotten by those privileged to listen.

In 1882 heavy financial loss came upon us as a family owing to the failure of an elder brother. Edward, in his efforts to help him, became deeply involved, and to satisfy his creditors was obliged to sell the copyrights of several of

his earlier books. These were bought by a friend without his knowledge at the time. After several years of incessant labor he worked his way out of these difficulties, and, owing to the immense sale of his books, was able to redeem his copyrights. He then felt free to take rest and change of scene in a trip to Southern California.

CHAPTER X

HOME LIFE

AS a matter of course, my brother had frequent calls from newspaper correspondents and others who were interested in, and curious about, the private life of a successful author. The first of the articles here quoted was entitled "A Talk with E. P. Roe," and was printed in a Brooklyn newspaper in 1886; the second appeared in a Detroit journal.

"The works of few novelists of the present day have had such remarkable sales as those of Mr. E. P. Roe, and this will be the more readily granted when it is known that one million copies of his novels have been sold in America alone, to which nearly one-half of that number may be added as representing their sale in England, Canada, Australia, and the different languages into which they have been translated.

"In appearance the novelist is a man of a trifle over the medium size, with a pleasant, intellectual face, which is almost covered with a rich and handsome coal-black beard and mustache. Mr. Roe is in the prime of manhood, being about forty-five years of age, and his manners and conversation are the most kindly and engaging. He is of a generous disposition, hospitable, a kind friend, and never happier than when in the bosom of his family, to which he is devotedly attached.

"It was the pleasure of the writer a few evenings ago to meet the novelist and engage him in conversation regarding himself and his works.

" 'I have just returned from an afternoon stroll,' remarked the novelist. 'This is my invariable custom after

VIEW FROM THE PIAZZA AT "ROELANDS."

my day's work. When do I work? Well, I generally sit down immediately after breakfast, which I have about eight o'clock, and with the exception of an hour for lunch, I write continuously from that time until three or four in the afternoon. Then I go out for my walk.'

"'You never work at night, then?' was asked.

"'No; it is a bad practice, and one that I rarely indulge in. There was a time when I did so, but my work always showed it. A writer's work at night is almost always morbid. There is no better time to work than during the morning.'

"'How much work constitutes a day's labor with you?'

"'That varies a great deal. Sometimes I write four or five pages of foolscap, and other days I will write as much as fifteen. I have no average, but do as much as I feel like doing, or have time to do, and then I stop.'

"'Do you derive genuine pleasure from your work?'

"'Always, for I am absorbed in whatever I am writing. I presume I derived the most pleasure from my "Nature's Serial Story," for it was an out-of-door study, and anything about nature always finds a responsive chord in me. Then, two of the characters of that work portray my father and my mother, and their memory is blessed and sacred to me. All the other characters are imaginary.'

"'Are your stories and novels based on facts and real happenings, as a rule?'

"'In every case,' replied Mr. Roe. 'I never manufacture a story; I couldn't do it. Of course, I elaborate and idealize, but the actual facts are always drawn from real life. I am always on the alert for these incidents, and when I see what I think is adapted for a story I make a note of it.'

"'Speaking of your correspondence, like that of most authors, I presume it is of a various nature?'

"'Yes, indeed,' laughingly replied the novelist. 'It is surprising what letters I sometimes receive, and how difficult it is for some persons to realize that an author's time is valuable. Of course, I am not a stranger to the autograph craze, and of these requests I receive, I think, more than my

share. But what is most surprising is the number of manuscripts I receive from young, aspiring authors. I am often asked "to read them, revise them carefully, and express an opinion as to the merit of the contribution." Why, I have frequently been requested to do a whole month's work on a single manuscript. What do I do with these? Well, the best I can. If I have a spare moment, I look over the story or article, and encourage the writer, if possible. But at times the supply is too great for physical endurance.'

" 'What exercise do you most indulge in, and what particular one do you recommend?'

" 'So far as I am concerned, I like a good, long walk, and this is what I would recommend to all who work with the brain and are confined. Exercise should never, in my opinion, be taken before sitting down to work, always after the task of the day has been completed. Then one receives far more benefit from it than if taken before work. I also like to work in my garden, and there is hardly a better means of exercise. Hunting and fishing are also favorite sports with me, and I keep a good gun and a fishing-rod close at hand.'

" 'Have you entirely given up gardening for literature?'

" 'Yes, almost entirely, even in an amateur way. Of course I still retain an active interest in everything that is interesting or new about a garden or a farm. But as to any active participation, as formerly, I have been obliged to desist.'

"It may be interesting here to mention that the grounds surrounding Mr. Roe's rural retreat at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson show no lack of proper care and attention. The property consists of twenty-three acres and is all cultivated for floral and farming purposes. The novelist has on these grounds alone over one hundred and twelve different varieties of grapes, and has had in his strawberry beds seventy different varieties of that luscious berry in bearing at one time. One year Mr. Roe's orchards yielded him, among other products, one hundred and fifty barrels of apples, and this year about forty bushels of pears will be taken from his trees.

" 'What are your immediate plans?' was asked the novelist, as he courteously showed the writer into the dining-room in response to the merry jingle of the dinner-bell.

" 'I am now taking a brief holiday, resting from overwork. In about two months I leave the North for Santa Barbara, California, where I may remain for a year, or may return next spring. All depends upon how my family and myself like the country there. I go there partly for pleasure and partly for work. I shall doubtless gather considerable new material, and this I shall incorporate in future works. I shall study the life of the people of that region, and intend more especially to devote myself to studying nature in the direction of trees, plants, as well as the animals, birds, etc., of that charming country. My return North is uncertain, as I have said, and should everything prove agreeable, I may extend my residence there indefinitely.'

"And here ended the writer's chat with perhaps the most popular author of the day. Mr. Roe is extremely retiring in disposition; he never courts notoriety, but always strictly avoids it whenever possible. And with his large black slouched hat set carelessly on his head a stranger would more readily mistake him for a Cuban planter, with his dark complexion, than the author of the novels which have entered into thousands of American homes."

"Cornwall is situated on the western bank of the Hudson, just north of the Highlands. If you arrive by steamer you find an energetic crowd of 'bus men, who are eager to be of service to you. Most of the vehicles have four horses attached, which seem to tell of a hill in the neighborhood. We passed Cornwall several times by boat, and saw enough of the energy of the hackmen to make us resolve to reach the place some time when they were absent. Consequently we sailed down on Cornwall as General Wolfe sailed down on Quebec—in a small boat, and captured the place easily.

"As we walked up the rickety steps that lead from the water to the wharf, there was no deputation there to meet us.

"'Now the first thing,' said my companion, 'is to find out where Mr. Roe lives.'

"'No, that's the second thing,' I replied. 'The first thing is to find out where we are to get supper.'

"The reasonableness of this proposal was so apparent that further remark was not so necessary as finding a hotel well stocked with provisions.

"We found it in the shape of an unpretentious brick structure at the foot of the hill. By the way, everything is at the foot of the hill at Cornwall Landing. The landlady, who was the pink of neatness, promised us all we could eat on our return, although if she had known my talents in that line she would have hesitated. I noticed that she referred to 'Mr. Roe, the author,' while our fellow voyager in the small boat spoke of him as 'the strawberry man.' Probably the boor who relished the production of Mr. Roe's garden would have been surprised to know that the productions of his pen were even more sought after than that delicious fruit.

"But evening is coming on and we have a long hill before us, so we must proceed. A Cornwall road is always either going up or down, and a person gets great opportunities for rising in the world as he turns his back on the Hudson and climbs to Cornwall. The road winds up the hill, often shaded by trees and always accompanied by a mountain torrent whose rocky bed lies deep beside the pathway. This stream lacks only one thing to make it a success—and that is water. No doubt after a heavy rain it would show commendable enterprise, but now the rocks were dry. A thin thread of clear spring water trickled along the bottom of the ravine, now forming a silvery-toned waterfall, then losing itself among the loose rocks, next finding itself again, and sometimes making the mistake which humanity often makes, of spreading itself too much and trying to put on the airs of larger streams.

"Half-way up is a spring, surrounded by benches, welcome to the pedestrian who finds tramping uphill business. The clear, cold water pours out, and an iron dipper, like

Prometheus 'chained to a pillar,' invites the thirsty to have a drink. The benches form a semicircle around this fountain, and on the backs thereof some one has painted in large letters the legend 'Please don't cut an old friend.' But 'excelsior' is our motto, and we climb. When we reach the top of the mountain we part company with the rivulet, thinking, with perhaps a sigh, what a vast advantage water has over people—it always goes down hill. Cornwall now begins to show its beauties. It seems to be a big village composed of splendid residences and elegant family hotels—or rather huge summer boarding-houses. Excellent roads run in all directions, up and down, turning now to the right and now to the left, until a stranger loses all idea of the points of the compass.

"About a mile from the landing, if you are in a carriage, or about five miles if you are on foot, you come to an open gateway, through which a road turns that might be mistaken for one of the many offshoots of the public street, were it not that a notice conspicuously posted up informs the traveller that the way is private property. A cottage, probably a gardener's residence, stands beside the gate. The land slopes gently downward from the road and then rises beyond, leaving a wide valley between the street and a large two-story frame building that stands on the rising ground. This is the home of E. P. Roe, author of 'Barriers Burned Away,' 'Opening a Chestnut Burr,' 'From Jest to Earnest,' and other well-known works, read and enjoyed by thousands in America and in England. Between the house and the road are long rows of strawberry plants that looked tempting even in September. The house stands in about the centre of a plot of twenty-three acres. The side is toward the road, and a broad piazza runs along the length of it, from which glimpses of the distant Hudson can be had through the framework of trees and hills. The piazza is reached by broad steps, and is high enough from the ground to make a grand tumbling-off place for the numerous jovial and robust youngsters that romp around there and call Mr. Roe 'papa'.

A wide hall runs through the centre of the house, and the whole dwelling has a roomy air that reminds one of the generous and hospitable mansions for which the South is famous. Mr. Roe's house is without any attempt at architectural ornamentation, unless the roof window in the centre can be called an ornament; but there is something very homelike about the place, something that is far beyond the powers of architecture to supply.

"My fellow-traveller sat down in one of the rural chairs that stood invitingly on the piazza, and I manipulated the door-bell.

"While the servant is coming to open the door I may as well confess that I have undertaken to write the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out.

"Mr. Roe was not at home.

"I tell this now so that the reader will not be disappointed when the girl opens the door.

"The door opens.

"Could we see Mr. Roe?

"Mr. Roe had left that very morning for New York.

" 'He evidently heard in some way we were coming,' said my companion, *sotto voce*.

"When would he return?

"Perhaps not this week. Would we walk in and see Mrs. Roe?

"The next thing to seeing an author is to see the author's wife, so we accepted the invitation and walked into the parlor. Before we walked out we came to the conclusion that the next thing to seeing the author's wife is to see the author.

"Now, of course, I might have taken an inventory of the articles in the parlor, just as if I were a deputy sheriff, or a tax collector, or something of that sort, but I didn't. I might tell of the piano that stood in one corner and the pile of music that reached from the floor to the top of it, and of the little table covered with stereoscopic views, and the photograph of Mr. Roe framed above it, and of the two low front windows with their river view and their lace curtains, and

the large folding-doors opening into the library, the workshop of Mr. Roe, and of the quiet, neutral tints of the carpet, or the many contents of the whatnot in the corner, and the paintings and engravings on the walls, and the comfortable easy-chairs, and the books scattered here and there, and of dozens of other things that made up an author's parlor, but I will not mention one of them.

"I had the idea that E. P. Roe was a kindly old gentleman with gray hair. Kindly he undoubtedly is, but old he is not. His portrait shows him to have a frank, manly countenance, with an earnest and somewhat sad expression. He has dark hair and a full beard, long and black. Mr. Roe is at present writing a series of articles on small fruits for 'Scribner's Magazine.' The publishers of that periodical intend to give a portrait of Mr. Roe, which will be the first ever published. It may appear in the December number, and if it does the readers of this paper are respectfully referred to the pages of that magazine. It seems to be the general idea that Mr. Roe is an old man. For instance, a lady writing from Wheeling, W. Va., to the 'Household,' a few weeks since, says:—

" 'Some one asked if Rev. E. P. Roe had taken his characters from life or not. Several years ago we had amongst us a certain Professor Roe (vocal teacher, possessing a beautiful tenor voice), said to be a son of the novelist. If he was a son, the character of Walter Gregory in "Opening a Chestnut Burr" was certainly drawn from him, and it always seemed to me that Dennis Fleet's wonderful voice in "Barriers Burned Away" was likened to his voice.'

"If this writer could have seen the youthful appearance of Mrs. Roe, she would have no hesitation in denying the professor's alleged relationship to the novelist. Her husband is not yet forty.

"I wish 'Scribner's' would publish a portrait of Mrs. Roe. It would certainly add to the popularity of the magazine. Such a lady must be a wonderful help to her husband. I

think, as a general thing, the world gives too little credit to the power behind the throne.

"Mrs. Roe deserves at least half the credit of 'Barriers Burned Away,' which is certainly E. P. Roe's most dramatic work, and had, no doubt, a great deal to do with many of his other volumes. This particular work describes the thrilling scenes of the Chicago fire with a vividness and power that is rarely surpassed. When the whole world was thrilled by the dreadful tidings of a city's destruction, Mr. Roe said to his wife that if he could collect some of the actual occurrences that must be transpiring there he thought he could write a book about it. Mrs. Roe at once decided for him. Her advice was that so tersely put by Mr. Greeley. Although nearly a thousand miles intervened, Mr. Roe was in Chicago before the fire had ceased, and the incidents so graphically depicted in 'Barriers Burned Away' were the result of actual observation.

"Most of Mr. Roe's characters are taken from real life, and all of his works are written for a purpose, as can readily be seen in 'What Can She Do?' for example. His next book, which will be published in a few days, will furnish another instance of writing for a purpose. Its title is, 'Without a Home;' the subject it treats is the tenement-house problem, which is at present agitating New York and all large cities. In this work the scenes and personages will be nearly all from real life. If the book were not in press the tenement-house fires in New York on Friday, causing the death of seven persons, would furnish a tragic climax to his story. What could be more terribly pathetic than the frantic mother penned in by the smoke and flame, dragging herself to the bedside of her children to die with them? In choosing the evils of the tenement-house system as a subject, Mr. Roe strikes at one of the worst features of city life.

"It was to finish the last pages of this book that Mr. Roe was now 'Without a Home' himself, and as the printers were clamoring for copy, he had betaken himself to a room in a New York hotel to write without interruption. Mr. Roe is

too good-natured to deny himself to visitors, and they make great inroads on his time.

" 'If he hears the voice of a friend,' said Mrs. Roe, 'he cannot remain at his desk.'

"So when there is work that must be done, Mr. Roe banishes himself from home and friends and flies to that loneliness which only a great and crowded city can supply.

"Mrs. Roe's favorite book is 'The Opening of a Chestnut Burr,' and this must be a favorite work with many, for it has reached its thirtieth thousand, not to mention the numerous reprints in England and Canada. The realistic incident in this work, which supplies the place the Chicago fire does in the other, is the sinking in mid-ocean of the French steamer Ville d'Havre.

"I think, although it is only mere conjecture on my part, that Mrs. Roe herself is the heroine of this book. For that reason I shall not attempt to say anything of the lady, as the reader can turn to the book and satisfy all curiosity there. But if I should find, at some future time, that I am mistaken in my surmise, I shall make that my excuse for the pleasant task of writing again of Mrs. Roe. The old homestead is described in the 'Opening a Chestnut Burr,' and naturally this would endear the book to those who lived there.

"The library in which Mr. Roe does his writing, when at home, is a sunny room filled from floor to ceiling with books. A large flat desk, covered with papers, stands in the centre of the room, and this is the novelist's work-bench. I shall conclude with a few words regarding Mr. Roe's method of working. Mr. Roe himself has supplied this in a letter written nearly a year ago, to an admirer, and part of which I am allowed to copy. This extract forms a portion of Mr. Roe's work never before published, and the writer himself had no idea it would ever appear in print. The letter bears date November 25, 1878. He says:—

" 'My aim is to spend the earlier part of the day in my study, but I cannot always control my time, much of which is lost in interruptions. I sometimes have to go away and shut

myself up for a time. I am not as systematic as I ought to be. I like to write the latter part of my books at white heat, first getting full of my story and then writing with a zest. I call from five to eight pages a good day's work, although in some moods I write many more. Again, I will work hard over three or four. I am opposed to night work.

" 'I hope to average five hours a day hereafter in my study, and three or four in my garden. I employ from ten to fifteen men and from ten to thirty boys in picking the berries. A large part of my labor is employed in taking up and packing plants. The department of fruit culture to which I give my chief attention, is the keeping of each variety separate and pure. This I trust to no one, and it requires constant vigilance.'

"After leaving the residence of Mr. Roe, we went half a mile or so further on to Idlewild, once the home of N. P. Willis. Darkness came on before we reached there and we had our labor for our pains.

"Mrs. Roe said that Idlewild is little changed since the poet left it. A recent freshet swept away the bridges he built in the Glen, but otherwise it is the same as it was before. Thus ended our visit to Cornwall-on-the-Hudson."

CHAPTER XI

SANTA BARBARA

MY brother's boyhood friend, Mr. Merwin, speaking of his visits at Cornwall later, says: "When honors came in troops, I found Edward was the same kindly unostentatious man, the truly loyal friend. Later, after some correspondence with me, he came to Southern California, where under those sunny skies and semi-tropical scenes his love of Nature found great delight.

"While visiting at Pasadena, as we drove about that beautiful city, he emphasized what he had often told me, that one of the great joys of his life was that which came to him from the hundreds of letters from all parts of the country, and many written by people in humble circumstances, thanking him most heartily for the cheer and encouragement he had given them through his books."

After a short stay with his friend in Pasadena Edward went with his wife and children to Santa Barbara. There they occupied a pleasantly situated cottage, owned by a New England lady and her daughter, under whose excellent care they enjoyed the rest and freedom from restraint that cannot be found in crowded hotels.

In a letter written to the Detroit "Tribune" my brother gives his experience of a California winter.

"My impression is that January first was the warmest day of the month. Certainly on no other days was I so conscious of the sun's heat, yet the air was so deliciously cool and fresh in the early morning. There had been a heavy

dew, and grass, weed, hedge, and flower were gemmed in the brilliant sunshine.

"Walking uptown with my mail at about ten in the morning, I found myself perspiring as upon a hot day in August, but there was no sense of oppression. One was exhilarated rather than wilted. After reaching our cottage piazza and the shelter of the climbing roses and honeysuckle, the change was decidedly marked. This is said to be the peculiarity the year round, even in midsummer. One has only to step out of the sun's rays in order to be cool, and the dead, sultry heat which sometimes induces one to yearn for the depths of a cave is unknown.

"As I sat there in the shade, letting the paper fall from my hand in the deeper interest excited by my immediate surroundings, I could scarcely realize that we were in the depths of winter.

"The air was fragrant from blooming flowers; finches and Audubon's warblers were full of song in the pepper trees, while humming-birds were almost as plentiful as bumble-bees in June.

"It was evident that the day was being celebrated in the manner characteristic of the place. One might fancy that half the population were on horseback. In twos and fours they clattered along the adjacent streets, while from more distant thoroughfares, until the sounds were like faint echoes, came also the sounds of horses' feet rapidly striking the hard adobe of the roadways. In addition to those who gave the impression of life and movement in the suburbs of the town, large equestrian parties had started for mountain passes and distant canyons, taking with them hearty lunches in which the strawberries were a leading feature. As long as the sun was well above the horizon delicate girls, almost in summer costume, could sit in the shade of the live-oaks in safety, but when the sun declines to a certain point, between four and five in winter, there is a sudden chill in the air, and those who do not protect themselves by wraps or overcoats are likely to

be punished with as severe colds as they would take in a Boston east wind.

"It has often seemed to me warmer at eight o'clock in the evening than at four in the afternoon.

"We resolved to have our holiday outing as well as the others, and after dinner were bowling out on the road to Montecito, the favorite suburb of Santa Barbara. The fields by the roadside were as bare and brown as ours in winter when not covered with snow, but drought, not frost, was the cause. The 'rainy season' was well advanced, but there had been no rain in quantity sufficient to awaken nature from her sleep. In this climate vegetation is always a question of moisture.

"When reaching the villa region of Montecito, blossoming gardens and green lawns illustrated this truth. After a visit to the beautiful grounds and fine residence of Mr. A. L. Anderson, so well remembered by thousands as the captain of the favorite Hudson River steamboat the 'Mary Powell,' we drove on to one of the largest orange groves on this part of the coast. Mr. Johnson, one of the proprietors, received us most hospitably, and led the way into a grove that sloped toward the mountains. The ground was scrupulously free from weeds, mellow as an ash heap, and had evidently been made very fertile. Mr. Johnson told me that he fed the trees constantly and liberally, and this course is in accordance with nature and with reason, for the orange tree never rests. While the fruit is ripening the tree is blossoming for a new crop. Always growing and producing, it requires a constant supply of plant food, and one of the causes of the deep green and vigorous aspect of the grove and its fruitfulness consisted undoubtedly in the richness at the roots.

"Another and leading cause was in abundant supply of water.

"From a canyon near by a mountain stream flowed down skirting the grove. This stream was tapped by an iron pipe at a point sufficiently high to furnish by gravity all the water

required, and it was distributed by a simple yet ingenious contrivance.

"The utmost vigilance is exercised against insect pests and the mutilation of the roots by gophers. The results of all this intelligent care and cultivation were seen in the surprising beauty and fruitfulness of the trees, which were laden with from one to two thousand golden-hued oranges, in addition to the green ones not to be distinguished from the leaves at a distance. Even so early in the season there were a sufficient number of blossoms to fill the air with fragrance.

"The brook babbled with a summer-like sound, and the illusion of summer was increased by the song of birds, the flutter of butterflies, and the warm sunshine, rendering vivid the gold and glossy green of the groves. Rising near and reflecting down the needed heat were the rocky and precipitous slopes of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Turning on one's heel, the silver sheen of the Pacific Ocean, gemmed with islands, stretched away as far as the eye could reach. Could this be January? On our way home I felt that it might be, for as the sun sunk low wraps and overcoats, which could not have been endured an hour before, seemed scarcely adequate protection against the sudden chill.

"Throughout the month there were many days like the first, summer-like sunshine followed by chilly evenings and cool nights. No rain fell and clouds were rarely seen. The temperature gradually became lower even at midday, and occasionally in the early morning there was a white frost on the boards and sidewalks. The roses grew more scattering in the bushes. Nature did not absolutely stop and rest, but she went slow over the cold divide of the year. I know not how it was with the old residents, but a sense of winter haunted me, especially on the quiet, star-lit nights. I sometimes questioned whether this sense resulted from the impressions of a lifetime, made at this season, or was due to climatic influences. To both, I fancy. When a baker's horse and wagon, furnished with bells, jingled by, it was a sleigh until memory asserted itself.

"When abroad, even in the bright, warm sunshine, something in the appearance of the sky, the feel of the atmosphere, and the aspect of the bare, brown fields suggested winter and created a momentary astonishment at the flowers which continued to bloom in the watered gardens.

"I was continually aware of a conscious effort to account for what I saw and to readjust my ideas to a new order of things.

"The season seemed an anomaly, for it was neither summer nor winter, fall nor spring, in accordance with one's previous impressions. The visage of nature had an odd and peculiar aspect. It was as if the face of an old friend had assumed an expression never seen before. There was no ambiguity or uncertainty upon one point, however, and that was the need of winter clothing by day and of blankets at night, roses and sunshine notwithstanding, and those proposing to come here should always remember the chill of shade and apartments without fires.

"Although the mercury never marks extreme cold, the sense of cold is often felt keenly unless adequate provision is made against it. All that is needed, however, is a little prudence, for one never has to guard against sudden and violent changes.

"As in the East, so here, winter is especially dedicated to social pleasures. Much of the gayety centres at the two fine hotels, the Arlington and the San Marcos, both under the efficient management of one proprietor, Mr. Cowles. The townspeople are much indebted to his genial courtesy, and the spacious parlors are often lined with the parents and chaperons of young ladies from the city of Santa Barbara as well as with his guests, while the entertainments have the best characteristics of a dancing party at a private dwelling. It is very fortunate for the young people that there are such unexceptional places in which to meet, for this town is peculiarly a city of cottages, few being large enough for assemblies of any considerable numbers.

"There is consequently much social life in a quiet, informal way.

"One of the remarkable characteristics of the town is the large percentage of what is justly termed good society—a society not resting its claims on wealth or an ancestry long known and recognized in the vicinity, but on the much better qualities of refinement, intelligence, and cultivation. Search for health and a genial climate have brought people here from all parts of the Union, and not a few, after long residence abroad, prefer this Pacific slope to any of the world-renowned regions on the Mediterranean. One therefore soon discovers a marked absence of provincialism and is led to expect that the quiet lady or gentleman to whom he is introduced has seen far more of the world than himself. The small, unpretentious cottage facing the grassy sidewalk may be inhabited by a mechanic, or it may be the dwelling-place of people cosmopolitan in their culture and experience. Strangers are not wholly dependent on each other for society, as is so often true of health resorts, but find a resident population both hospitable and acquainted with life in its most varied aspects. Much of the abundant leisure possessed by many is spent in reading, and to this pleasure a large, well-selected free library contributes greatly."

Edward had the good fortune to arrive at Santa Barbara in time to witness its unique centennial celebration, of which he gives a detailed description.

"Santa Barbara, Cal., January 7, 1887.

"Few more interesting events ever took place in the quaint and quiet town of Santa Barbara than its centennial, and nothing resembling it in any true sense can ever occur again. The Indian element of this region receded and disappeared before the Spanish, and the latter population is fast becoming a minority among the still paler faces arriving from the East. The time perhaps is not distant when Santa Barbara may be known as a New England city. Even in its centennial the great effort made to recall the past and the

old resulted in a large degree from the interest taken by new comers in vanishing phases of life. The success of the enterprise was due largely to the organization, young in age and composed chiefly of youthful members, entitled the 'Go Ahead Club.' The name itself suggests the East, and the opposite of the Spanish disposition to permit each day to be a repetition of a former day, yet the club had the tact and friendly feeling to co-operate with the best Spanish element, and to bring about a festival week which interested all classes of people.

"For days even a stranger was impressed by a slight bustle of preparation. When riding up from the steamer we saw, in the dim starlight, that a great arch spanned Main Street. Observation in the bright sunshine of the morrow proved this arch to be a wooden structure and a fine imitation of the front of the old Mission with its quaint towers. Busy workmen were draping the edifice with some variety of aromatic evergreen and with palm leaves, and it still remains as a suggestion to new comers of what they missed in not arriving earlier.

"The opening ceremonies of the week naturally centred at the Mission Church, and on Sunday the religious phase of the festival culminated. Even before we were through breakfast groups were seen pressing from town. Later there were the sounds of rapid wheels and the echoing tramp of horses. We soon joined the increasing throng wending its way up the slopes which lift the Mission above the town and place it against the grand mountain background. Spanish colors, red and yellow, hung from tower to tower, while American flags floated from the belfry arches. Within the long, narrow interior of the church the sunshine contended with innumerable candles flickering on the altar, at the shrines, and from the chandeliers. The softly blended light revealed the beautiful decorations drawn from the abundant flora and plant life of the region.

"The elaborate service began, the fragrance of roses was lost in that of the incense, the rustle of dresses and tread of

incoming feet in the mellow tones of the chanting priest and the responses of the choir. Every seat and all standing room was occupied, rich and poor sharing alike according to the earliness of their arrival. Next to a dark-visaged Spanish laborer might be seen the delicate bloom of a New England girl's features. Beautiful lace mantillas were worn in several instances. In looking at them one sighed as he thought of the various monstrosities termed bonnets which disfigure modern women. The clergy were in their most gorgeous robes, strong contrasts in tone and color on every side, but above all was a sense of the past touching the present in many and unexpected ways; and this effect was enhanced by a sermon in English, giving an account of the founding of the Mission. Late one afternoon, on a subsequent day, I found the door of the church open and, venturing in, saw the western sun shining through the high, narrow windows, lighting up shrines and images with the mellowest light and throwing others into the deepest shadow.

"No one was visible, yet in the silence and desertion of the place one felt more like worship than when, a part of the throng, he witnessed the ceremonials of the preceding Sunday.

"Later still, returning from a ramble in Mission Canyon, I peeped into the old church once more. Twilight had deepened into dusk—all was dark within, except the faintest glimmer of a taper at the altar, where it was evident that some of the Franciscans were engaged in their devotions. As I crept noiselessly away the bells chimed out from the belfry. In the upper gallery of the long corridor stretching from the right of the chapel there was an immediate opening of doors and a shuffling of feet.

"Evidently the bells had summoned to some new duty—attendance in the refectory at that hour, I trust—and I could have cordially joined the venerable fathers then, however simple their diet.

"On Monday the festival passed into its secular aspect. The morning was deemed most unfavorable in this climate,

where a cloud, even in winter, is far more rare than roses. The sky was overcast with what Spaniards call a 'high fog.' But the sun soon proved to be the victor, for early in the day the leaden pall was shot through and through with light. Not only from the most distant and well-to-do ranches, but from all the small adobe houses and huts that skirt the mountains, the people were on the way to town in the early hours. They appeared on the streets in almost every description of vehicle imaginable, and not a few looked as if they had trudged from a long distance. The majority, both of men and women, had apparently ridden in on their broncho horses, the hardy and often vicious native breed of the region. The townspeople had prepared a brilliant welcome, for the whole length of State Street was decorated with flags and streamers of many and varied devices, the Spanish and American colors blending most amicably. There was bustle and movement, life and color, with an increasing concourse throughout the whole length of the thoroughfare. To a stranger's eye, men in various costumes were riding aimlessly and often furiously to and fro, but as noon approached affairs began to culminate in the blocks above the Arlington Hotel. Here the procession was forming, and it proved to be the chief event of the week. Nature was now assisting to make the occasion all that could be desired. The clouds that had threatened now merely saved the day from an unredeemed glare. After the usual delay in processions, it began to pass the balcony of the Arlington Hotel, where scores of guests were assembled to witness the pageant. First came the grand marshal in a genuine Mexican suit and mantle. Following him were his aides, dressed in rich, various, and characteristic Spanish costumes, some of which were remarkable for their beauty and others were picturesque in the extreme. One young gentleman was habited in blue, lavishly laced with silver. It was the cadet uniform of the Spanish army, and had belonged to his grandfather. Another, clad in cream-white satin and gold lace, with crimson sash and other accessories, made a striking figure.

"Indeed, each of the aides graced the occasion in handsome costumes which were, as I was told, no capricious and fancy affairs, but a reproduction of the gala habiliments of the past. They sat their fine horses in Mexican saddles which were in themselves marvels of old and curious workmanship. A like cavalcade in Broadway would draw out the town.

"Next in order came the Spanish division, men and women on horseback, and nearly fifty strong. It was evident that all heirlooms in dress had been rummaged from their receptacles and made to fit the descendants of remote ancestors. It would be hard to say how many different ages and how many provinces in Spain and Mexico were represented.

"To modern eyes the picturesque had the ascendency over other qualities, but all welcomed the man carrying a guitar. At any rate, this division passed all too quickly, singing an ancient Spanish song. Close upon them were a band of soldiers clad in suits of antiquated buff jerkins, armed in old Mexican style with long pikes and muskets that may have been formidable once. It is doubtful whether a band so representative of the old Spanish element will ever appear on the streets of an American town again. Years hence such an attempt will be more of a masquerade than a reproduction. In this instance the genuine Spaniards were too numerous and their traditions too recent and real to permit impositions.

"Many Spaniards and native Californians not in costume now followed, and then came an old-fashioned ox-cart, dating back a century and drawn by oxen yoked by the horns. Within the cart was a wooden plow that had turned some of the earliest furrows in this region, and would have been equally satisfactory at the time of Abraham. In this age of invention one wonders that people remained satisfied so long with such primitive methods and implements. Appropriately following the cart, the like of which had been used by their ancestors, came the shrunken band of Mission Indians, the two foremost of them carrying a portrait, draped in Spanish colors, of Padre Junupero Serra.

"The good father passed away centuries ago, and the Indians he sought to civilize are also nearly extinct, but the principles which actuated him have redeemed his name from forgetfulness and will crown it with increasing honor.

"The half-dozen Indians were chanting some wild song of their own when the fine band from San Luis Obispo struck up and the wail-like echo of the past was lost. Then came another significant and diminishing company, the Grand Army of the Republic. On every public occasion the ranks are thinner and the hair of the veterans grayer. They, too, will soon leave but a name, but it will not be forgotten.

"Driving away sad, if not gloomy thoughts, comes now a vision of beauty and youth; the joy of to-day and the rich promise of the future—an indefinite number of young girls who, in their two-wheeled village carts, or 'tubs,' as the English term them, drew forth rapturous applause. Well they might, for they were in harmony with the loveliness of the June-like day. Their little carts had been transformed into floral bowers. The flowers and greenery so festooned the horses that they were half-hidden, while wheels within wheels of smilax, roses, geraniums, daisies, and other blossoms revolved in unison with the outer circumferences. Each little cart had its own distinctive character, and some had been decorated with rare taste and originality. Not a few of the girls carried parasols constructed entirely of roses, or of geraniums, passion flowers, orange blossoms, etc. Greenhouses had not been stripped for them, nor, indeed, the open gardens from which they had been taken. Truly, no such visible and delightful proof could have been given to our Northern eyes that we had come to the land of flowers. Gardens, orange trees golden with fruit, formed the background for this charming part of the procession, while beyond and above all rose the grand Santa Ynez Mountains, softening their rugged outlines with half-veiling mists.

"Burlesque followed close upon beauty in the form of an old farm-cart laden with the coarser vegetables and driven by two young men in the garb of ancient females. The trades'

procession came next, and spoke well for the business of the city, but our eyes soon dwelt lovingly on over a hundred school children, who made, by their unrestrained laughter, the sweetest music of the day, while two little girls riding on one much-bedecked donkey caused ripples of merriment as they passed.

"A cavalcade of carriages and of ladies and gentlemen on horseback seemed about to close the procession, when there appeared one of the most interesting features yet seen—a train of pack mules, not merely illustrating the former method of transportation, but that employed to-day by the owner of the train. I hastened to the director, whose dress indicated a rude mountaineer, and expected a half intelligible reply from a Spaniard. The accent of his first word led me to scan his delicate Anglo-Saxon features. I eventually learned that he was a New Yorker, a member of one of its best-known families, and not a native of a little-known wilderness.

"Nevertheless he is a mountaineer. Dressed for a Fifth Avenue company one would not suspect it, his form is so slight and complexion so fair. Dudes would not be abashed at his presence, yet they would expire under one day of his experiences.

"Only by a mule train, led over a scarcely practicable trail, can he reach his distant ranch, that is forty-five miles back in the heart of the mountains. Here, with another young man, a kindred spirit, he cares for an increasing herd of cattle, and if necessary is ready to protect it from wild animals. The grazing grounds are far within a region about as wild as it ever has been. How about the young men who whine when they can find nothing to do?

"The interest of the two closing days of the festival centred at the racecourse and at the pavilion. The chief attractions at the former place were to be seen on Tuesday, and they were of a mixed character. We were treated to what would seem to be a rather rare phenomenon in Santa Barbara—a genuine Indian summer day of the warmest type, as we

know it at the East. A haze partly obscured the Santa Ynez Mountains, softened the outlines of the foothills and blended the ocean with the sky. The air was soft and balmy in the extreme, but one soon detected a slight chill in the shade. All sorts of vehicles, from stages of unwieldy height, open barouches, farmers' wagons of all descriptions, top buggies, down to the numerous little two-wheeled carts, rapidly converged toward the judges' stand. As on all gala occasions here, however, the number on horseback was very large, the ladies sitting their horses with perfect ease and grace. Not a few, like myself, were content to trudge to the rendezvous on foot. The grand stand was soon crowded, and the vast, restless concourse stretched far to the right and left on either side of the racetrack. The horsemanship of the Spaniards could only be surpassed by the fine action of their steeds, and all lovers of this noblest of animals must have been delighted. In the effort to show how wild cattle were lassoed, thrown, and branded there appeared to be too much needless cruelty, and when a miserable little bull was tormented into savageness, and the semblance of a bull-fight took place, scores of people turned away in disgust.

"The finest equestrianism could not redeem the scene from brutality. The victims were the wretched bull, a fine innocent horse badly gored, and the people who could not endure to see animals suffer needlessly. So also in the afternoon great skill was undoubtedly manifested in lassoing the feet of the wild broncho horses, and in the process of subduing them, yet one pitied the poor creatures too greatly for enjoyment and soon turned away. The helpless beasts were checked in full career, often thrown upon their heads, turning a complete somersault. One animal, I was told, broke its neck in the operation, and so escaped further suffering. Such scenes, no doubt, illustrated much that was common in the life of the early settlers, but happily it is a past phase, and will scarcely be reproduced again in this region.

"It was interesting to observe the many types of people in festival costume, the Indian in his blanket, the Spaniard

wearing the broad sombrero, and the belle from New York reflecting the latest mode. There was movement, light, color, vivacity, and excitement.

"Every moment or two the eye caught glimpses of swift, spirited horses and their graceful riders, and yet one's glance was often lured from it all to the grand, mist-veiled mountains beyond. Many of the scenes and objects at the pavilion were very interesting to our foreign eyes and ears. Here Spanish and American life met and mingled in a far more agreeable way. Several ladies had taken charge of the large building, erected for horticultural purposes, and by the aid of greenery, flowers, flags, and a blending of Spanish and American colors, had transformed the spacious interior into a decorated hall well fitted for a festival. In the centre of the hall rose a flower stand suggesting Moorish architecture, its arches making fitting frames for the young girls within. One might buy flowers, but his eye lingered rather on the fair flower-girls in their charming costumes. Among the booths was one in which some Spanish ladies had kindly permitted to be exhibited some of their ancient treasures—velvet mantles, embroidered shawls, etc. Even to masculine eyes they were marvellously beautiful, rich, and intricate in their designs. The ladies stood before them with clasped hands and expressed themselves in exclamation points. The chief attraction, however, was the stage, on which were tableaux and, above all, the genuine Spanish fandango. One of the dances was a waltz, with an intricate figure which you felt might go on forever, and that you could look on a good part of the time. At first it struck one as merely simple, graceful, and very slow, and guided by monotonous music; but while you looked and listened a fascination grew upon you hard to account for. The oft-repeated strain began to repeat itself in your mind; you felt rather than saw how it controlled the leisurely gliding figures—for there is no hopping in the Spanish dances—until at last, in fancy, you were moving with them in perfect time and step. In brief, the dance had the effect of a strain of music which, when first heard, is not at all striking, yet is

THE STUDY AT "ROELANDS."

soon running in your head as if it had a spell not easily broken. On the programme the dance was entitled 'Contra Danza.' Later a Spaniard who has a wide local reputation, I believe, appeared in what was termed 'Son-jarabe.' He certainly left nothing to be desired in his performance after his fashion, but the grace of the lady who accompanied was inimitable. From my somewhat distant point of view she appeared to be dressed in a simple black gown and wore no ornaments. She needed none. No bespangled dancer I ever saw so enchained my eyes. One would almost think that an orange, placed upon her head, would not fall off, and yet a more utter absence of stiffness in movement was never witnessed. She seemed ever approaching, yet ever receding from, her companion; a moment near, then far away, gliding to one side or the other, as if impossible to be reached in her coquetry of elusive grace. Each separate movement was called out in Spanish, and in a varied, half-musical accent not easily described.

"At the closing centennial ball like dances were repeated, the participants wearing Spanish costumes. Here we had a nearer and more distinct view of the fandango. We again saw the 'Contra Danza,' and another, even more intricate, that was as odd as it was full of grace and unexpected action. If 'La Jota' is an old dance, it should certainly take the place of many that have little to redeem them from commonplace, if not worse.

"Son-jarabe was again repeated to the pleasure of all, and especially of the Spaniards, who, in conformance with an old custom, expressed their satisfaction by raining silver down upon the floor from the gallery. There was the same weird intoning by the master of ceremonies, calling off the different measures; the same constantly recurring strains of music that haunted one long afterward, and the same slow yet singularly graceful movement of the dancers. All were in Spanish costume, although many American young men and maidens were also participants, yet had been taught so well by their Spanish friends that they were scarcely to be distinguished from

them. The Spanish dances that I saw did not strike me as at all voluptuous, and no one appeared who was not dressed in accordance with the strictest ideas of decorum. The whole pageant passed away with the ball, and nothing remains to remind us of the centennial but the green arch spanning State Street. The old Mission stands out gray and silent, except that its bells occasionally chime out for reasons unknown to me."

Writing again, in April, my brother describes the change wrought by the first heavy rainfall of the season.

"One of the drawbacks to Santa Barbara is the dust, and it is a disagreeable accompaniment of a dry climate which must be accepted. Toward the end of January there were occasionally high, gusty winds which reminded one of March experiences at home. At times the dust rose in clouds and obscured the city, and to my taste the wildest snowstorm would be preferable to these chilling, stifling tempests. They were not frequent or long continued, however, and the old inhabitants said they presaged rain, the great bounty for which the whole State was longing.

"A rainless winter is a terrible misfortune, and when February finds the ground hard and dry there is deep and natural anxiety.

"In one dry season, years ago, forty thousand head of cattle perished. With present means of communication this probably would not happen again, but a check would be given to budding prosperity which would take several fruitful years to overcome. There were scores of people hesitating whether to buy or build who would decide favorably if the usual rainfall occurred. When, therefore, on the 5th the first storm of the season set in, rejoicing and congratulations were general. Seldom before have I so realized what a heavenly bounty rain is. The whole population were hoping, waiting, longing, and one would be callous indeed not to sympathize. For that matter, the interests of temporary visitors were also deeply involved, as may be illustrated by the pleas-

ure I had in watching from my study window the bare, brown foothills become greener daily. With intervals, designed, it would seem, to give the parched earth time to take in the precious moisture, the rains continued for about ten days. At last there was a steady downpour for nearly twenty-four hours, and then dawned a morning that for brightness, clearness, and beauty left nothing to be imagined. The birds were fairly ecstatic in their rejoicings and nature seemed to be tripping forth like a young girl to her work. It may be that she will have to perfect most of the products of the earth without another drop of rain, and she will prove equal to the task.

"A fruitful year in this section does not depend on seasonable storms and showers, as with us, but upon the number of inches of the winter rainfall, the soil retaining sufficient moisture to carry the crops through in safety. Many tourists came in the height of the storm, and some had a hard time of it. The hotels were crowded, and not a few, miserably seasick, were driven from house to house in pouring rain searching for rooms. Except on State Street the highways of the city are little more than country roads, the bottom of which, as in Virginia, seems to have fallen out. One stage-load was spilled into the mud and no doubt carried away sinister memories of 'sunny Santa Barbara.' The weather, which was the salvation of the country, was well anathematized by transient visitors, and one lady was overheard to remark that she had seen the first of the place and hoped that she had seen the last. Thus judgments and opinions are formed. Those who remained and saw the exquisite phases of spring rapidly developing under the vivid sunshine would be in no hurry to see the last of Santa Barbara, and a more perfect summer morning has rarely been seen than dawned on the last day of the month."

CHAPTER XII

RETURN TO CORNWALL—LETTERS

I SPENT the summer of 1887 with Edward and his family at Santa Barbara; and he left me there in September on his return to his home at Cornwall. He expected to come back during the winter of 1889; and just a week before his sudden death, while I was at the Western Chautauqua, near Monterey, I had my last letter from him, telling of his plans for a California story which he hoped to write when once more at Santa Barbara.

That evening, Major-General O. O. Howard gave a lecture upon the Battle of Gettysburg, and at its close I had some conversation with him, in the course of which I spoke of the letter just received. He had been well acquainted with my brother at West Point. I remember his saying at this time: "I gave a copy of 'A Knight of the Nineteenth Century' to a young man about whose course of life I felt great anxiety, and that book, he wrote me, was the means of his entire reformation."

This is but one of many similar instances that came before me personally during my sojourn in the West.

At the time of Edward's departure from Santa Barbara he had engaged to write a story for "Harper's Magazine" which should be a sequel to "Nature's Serial," and which was to be fully illustrated by Mr. William Hamilton Gibson. It was therefore necessary for him to be near the scenes of his proposed story and in easy communication with Mr. Gibson.

It may not be out of place to print here the following letters. Many of them are separated by long intervals of time and have no direct connection with each other, but they

are expressive of the warm friendship that existed between my brother and the talented artist.

"Santa Barbara, July 17, 1887.

"My dear Mr. Gibson:—The longer I remain here and the more I see of this region the oftener I think of you: and the more earnestly I am bent on your coming here with your sketch-book.

"The scenery is just in your line, yet different from anything you have yet done. Phew! what a book we could make together out here. During the past week Mrs. Roe and I went over the Santa Ynez Mountains, and I wished for you at every turn of the San Marcus Pass. Then there are scores of these, with beautiful canyons. But I will tell you about them in September, when I hope to see you.

"I expect to give much of September and all of October to the study of the Highlands, and only wish you can so arrange as to be with me as much as possible.

"I've been toiling over the Earthquake story, and while you and the critics will say it is no great 'shakes,' I shall have to remember how the mountain labored. I have at least a month's more work upon it, and am giving up the whole of my time to it, now that I am in the mood for writing.

"How are you enjoying the summer, and are you very busy?

"Lucky you did not get into that fight with the Park Commissioners during your July heats. If you had there would have been some 'ha'r lifted,' as they say out on the plains. You would make a better subject for a scalping-knife than I. Have you seen much of Mr. Alden? He sent me two fine photographs of himself recently.

"I trust that Mrs. Gibson and the boy are keeping well through the intense heat of which we read in the papers. This climate surpasses anything I ever imagined. We have had but one hot day thus far. July has been delightfully cool, about the same as last December, with the exception that the evenings and nights are a little warmer. The sea-

bathing is superb. Mrs. Roe and all five children are enjoying it this afternoon. "Yours sincerely,

"E. P. Roe."

"Washington, Conn., September, 1887.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Welcome home, one and all! Such is the burden of my emotions as I read in to-day's paper that Mr. Roe, the Romanser, has returned to civilization from the Santa Barbarans, and is once more at 'Shanty Clear.'

"Seriously, I am immensely delighted that you are once more with us, and shall look forward to an early meeting. And now apropos—we, my wife and I, have enjoyed many a memorable season of pleasure at your country home. Can we not persuade you and Mrs. Roe to give us a visit at ours? for here is my favorite camping ground and my home acre. As soon as you feel sufficiently rested from your trip, and providing you are so disposed, will you make us happy by spending a few days with us?—that is if you still remember your neglectful correspondent and care to hobnob with him as of yore.

"That proposed Highland trip is immensely tempting, and I shall hope to arrange to take a few days outing with you, but alas! it cannot be until early November or the very last of October. I am so *full* of obligations until then.

"Don't call this a letter. It is written in the face of a yawning mail-bag and must be judged accordingly.

"Your sincere friend,

"Gibson."

Mr. Gibson's own work was so pressing that autumn that he was unable to spare the time for the Highland trip mentioned in his letter, when many of the sketches were to be made for the projected story. The remaining letters are from my brother to Mr. Gibson.

"December 15, 1880.

"Some one rang at my door to-day—he must be nigh of kin to Santa Claus—and left your superb volume. It almost took away my breath.

"I gave you 'Small Fruits' only. But the fruits of your pencil and pen are the reverse of small.

"Do you realize what a benefactor you are in sending me, on this dull cloudy day, exquisites of the finest seasons of the year? Spring is months away, but I have had the sweetest glimpse of spring beside my winter fire. The blazing wood supplied the warmth—and your fancy did the rest in reproducing June.

"I am deeply in your debt. Draw on me for unlimited quantities of strawberries."

"April 16, 1882.

"I was determined to find you a four-leaf clover, and yesterday I succeeded.

"It will bring you no end of good luck."

"January 31, 1884.

"Don't worry when you are not in writing condition. If needful you can drop a postal now and then. The best way is to come up Saturday night and have a talk. You need a little change and mountain air.

"I am writing by this mail for Mr. and Mrs. Dielman to come at the same time. Why would it not be a good plan to get together and talk over the completion of the story and take a sleigh ride?

"You have no idea how a little change freshens one up, and if you can spend Sunday and Monday we will all have a country frolic. I need one myself. I have been overworking and was very ill from nervous trouble for a few days. I went right to Nature, tramped and rode in the open air. So come Saturday by all means, for we all want to see you.

"Beautiful red-pine grosbeaks are feeding about the piazza like chickens. With your powers you could go and pick them up."

"December 13, 1884.

"I should have written to you or seen you before, but I have been working hard to get the 'St. Nicholas' serial well advanced.

"My heart is in the continuation of 'Nature's Serial.' Take the press generally, that book is being received remarkably well. I tell you frankly my aim now is to prepare one of the most beautiful books that has ever been published in this country. From what Dielman has said I have no doubt but that he'll go in with me. I also mentioned Mr. Frost to Alden and I shall also go see Mrs. Foote. It is possible she may be willing to take a part of the illustrations.

"But I shall be heartbroken if you cannot take the part of Hamlet in the performance. If you will, you can make old Cro'nest and Storm King your monuments, and few will pass up or down the river without mentioning your name.

"I shall begin to make my studies in January. In the meantime it will be a summer story, although I expect to close it at Christmas, and it will be full of just such material as suits your pencil.

"I would like at least four illustrations for each number, as many full-paged as possible.

"Mrs. Roe joins me in regards to Mrs. Gibson."

"December 29, 1884.

"What can I say to you? How make you *appreciate* how greatly we *appreciate* and value your beautiful remembrance? We all went into ecstasies over the picture, which arrived in perfect safety. It should have gone into the book if I had seen it before, and had had any influence. As it is, it rounds out 'Nature's Serial' to my mind, and leaves it a past experience without alloy, except as I remember the imperfection of my own work. Can you wonder at my desire to be at work with you again some day?

"But we will leave that for the present, as you say, I living in hopes that the way will open for you to explore the Highlands with me, and to reveal their beauties to the public far better than I can. You see Nature as I do, only you interpret it to me, and make it more beautiful than the reality appears.

"I will have the picture framed as you suggest, and when

you soon come to Cornwall again it will greet you from an honored place in our parlor.

"Mrs. Roe and the girls, with our guests, were as greatly pleased as myself.

"Mr. and Mrs. Drake also sent us a beautiful bit of art. I am just delighted with the way Mr. Drake is taking hold of my 'St. Nicholas' serial. I send the magazine for the year to W. H. Gibson, Jr.

"You did indeed win a victory over the 'incrementitious' critic. I should think he would wish to crawl into a small hole, and 'pull the hole in after him.' Indeed you are triumphing over all your critics, and winning your rightful place. I knew this would be true years ago, because of your own truth to Nature.

"Such an experience may never come to me, probably because I do not deserve it, but I am content to make some warm friends, like the writer of the enclosed letter. If what some of my critics say is true, a good many people who write and speak to me are awful and unnecessary liars.

"I enjoyed your triumph as greatly as if it were my own. It was the neatest thrust under the fifth rib I ever saw, and I fear I shall never have enough Christian meekness not to enjoy seeing a fellow receive his *conge* when so well deserved. Dr. Abbott and I took part in the 'wake' up here.

"That the coming year may be the most prosperous and happy that you and yours have ever known is the wish of your sincere friend."

"February 17, 1885.

"I have made arrangements with the best guide of the Highlands, one who knows every lake, pond, road, peak, man, woman, child and dog in the mountains.

"We start out on our first explorations the latter part of May, when Nature is in her loveliest mood. Say you'll go. —I think the whole serial can be finished by October. You and Mrs. Gibson can get excellent board at Cornwall. Thus you will identify yourself with the Hudson as you have with New England. I expect by then to have finished my 'St.

Nicholas' story and then will have the decks cleared for action. Our regards to Mrs. Gibson and the baby."

"March 18, 1885.

"I went down to attend Mr. Cyrus Field's reception. The trains were so delayed that I was nearly all day getting to the city.

"Well, I met Mr. Stoddard, and spent a pleasant hour with him at the Century Club on the evening of March 7th. He asked to be introduced to me, and I remarked 'that I was surprised that he would take such a literary sinner by the hand.' He replied, 'We are a pair of them.' We chatted pleasantly a few moments in the supper-room, and then he concluded, 'Well, you are a good fellow to forgive me.'

"Some time after he asked me to go upstairs with him, and we had a smoke together. I introduced him to Colonel Michee of West Point, who is about to publish a book.

"Stoddard gave me his autograph unsolicited, written with his left hand and then backwards. I told him that I was glad he appreciated you. We had a long, merry talk, and in his conversation he said he would be very glad to have a copy of 'Nature's Serial' with your, Dielman's, and my autographs. This request was wholly unsuggested, and he truly appeared to wish the book. Therefore, when you are at Harper's will you write your name on the fly-leaf, and then ask them to express the book to me? I will get Dielman's autograph. Altogether it was a spicy interview. I received that eulogy of your work in the Boston paper, and had said the same in substance to two or three of Harper's firm before."

"September 16, 1887.

"Your hat in the air was almost as inspiring as the sight of old Storm King.

"It was very pleasant to be welcomed, and the day after my arrival I had to shake hands with nearly every man, woman and child, white and black, that I met.

"Mrs. Roe took cold before we started on the long trip,

and has been very ill; is so yet, though she is gaining now steadily. I do not know when I can see you.

"I long for the quiet of home life. It will require a sheriff and his posse to get me out of the house again. Put down your promise to visit me and tramp the Highlands in big capitals. If you should be in town and have a spare night come up here for a smoke and talk."

"January 1, 1888.

"Thanks for your letter. It was almost as long as mine.

"I spent most of 'watch-night' on old Storm King with my children and Mr. Denton. We expected some other friends, who were detained by the storm. Coasting in a snow-storm proved very agreeable after all, especially as the road was lined with torches. The sleighs went like express trains, and I was glad to get all safe home to the oyster supper which Mrs. Roe had ready for us as the old year took its departure.

"I have amused myself in watching old Storm King, that in the wild rain has been taking on many aspects. We have had a sort of family holiday with the few friends coming and going, and I have enjoyed all, seeing the children have a good time.

"I have had so much work on hand that I had to keep busy the greater part of each day.

"I suppose your little boy has enjoyed the season immensely. Does he still believe in Santa Claus, or have you and Mrs. Gibson, in the interest of truth (see discussion in papers), felt bound to explain that you filled his stocking with articles bought at a certain store? My little girl is still considering how in the mischief the old fellow got down the chimney.

"The sleighing is all gone. When it comes again we want you and Mrs. Gibson to take some mountain rides with us.

"Happy New Year to you all."

But other literary friends besides Mr. Hamilton Gibson were welcome guests at Edward's Cornwall home; among

them were Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Stoddard, Mr. John Burroughs, Mr. Stedman, Mr. Alden, of "Harper's Magazine," and Mr. Julian Hawthorne.

CHAPTER XIII

LAST BOOK—DEATH

DURING the winter of 1887-88 Edward wrote his last book, "Miss Lou," a tale of Southern life during the Civil War. In the spring he went down to Virginia to visit some scenes he wished to describe, and while there had a slight attack of neuralgia of the heart. The physician he called in ordered him to return home at once, and rest for a time.

In June he seemed to have completely recovered his health, and sent his usual invitation to the Philolethean Club of New York clergymen, who then made their eighteenth and last visit.

On the 19th of July, however, my brother complained during the day of not feeling very well, although he walked about the grounds inspecting his plants as was his custom. After dinner, in the evening, he sat in his library reading aloud from one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's works to his daughter and one of her young friends. Suddenly he paused, placed his hand over his heart, and said, "There comes that sharp pain again. I shall have to go upstairs to my wife for some remedy." But he left the room with a smile. After he had taken the remedy, which did not give relief, his wife sent in haste for a physician, who as soon as he arrived saw there was no hope of my brother's recovery. After about forty minutes of extreme agony, Edward seemed to feel relieved, rose to his feet, and attempted to cross the room, but turned quickly toward his wife with a look of sur-

prise and joy, exclaiming, "Oh, my God!"—then fell lifeless to the floor.

At the age of fifty, in the full vigor of manhood, his earthly career came to an end. His funeral was held in the little church at Cornwall, where he had first consecrated his life to the service of Christ, and where he and his family had worshipped for so many years.

Then he was laid to rest in the quiet graveyard on a beautiful knoll overlooking the Hudson, beside his parents and his own baby boy.

Only a little earlier in that month, and just three weeks before his death, Edward invited the Authors' Club, of which he was a member, to spend a day at his Highland home.

These lines were written in acceptance by Mr. E. C. Stedman:—

> "Know'st thou the bank where 'Triumph de Gands' are red
> (My books might be were I on berries fed);
> Where Cro'nest lowers and Hudson laughs below it,
> And welcome waits each editor or poet?
> Know'st thou in fact the realm of E. P. Roe?
> Hither, O hither, will I go."

I insert here several accounts of this last meeting, written after my brother's death by members of the Club who were present.

"I had the pleasure of meeting E. P. Roe twice. The first time was in May, 1888, at the Authors' Club in New York. It was a balmy spring evening. I had strolled into the club-rooms feeling rather lonesome among so many strangers, for I was then a new member of the Club, and, stopping at the table to admire a great basketful of apple-blossoms, I fell into conversation with a tall, fine-looking, genial-faced gentleman, who told me that he had just brought the flowers down from his farm on the Hudson for 'the boys.' I was mentally guessing who this gentleman with the noble brow and the black flowing beard could be, when some one

approached and called him 'Roe.' We were soon left alone again, and I hastened to say: 'Have I the honor of speaking to E. P. Roe?' Placing a hand on my shoulder, and bending near me with a kindly smile, he answered: 'I am E. P. Roe; and may I ask your name?' Finding that I was from the South, he seemed to be especially glad of my acquaintance, and we were soon off in a corner, seated face to face, he asking questions fast, and with the greatest interest, and I answering to the best of my ability, concerning the war history and the mountain scenery of my native State. He was particularly anxious to get at the exact social relation between the whites and blacks at the close of the war—especially the feeling of the blacks toward the whites—with a view of making correct statements in a novel that he thought of writing. Each member of the Club soon wore an apple-blossom *boutonniere*, and the rooms were full of the delicate perfume of these delicious flowers. That night, on leaving the Club, I took home with me a spray of the blossoms, and put it in water, and on the following day it shed its fragrance for the pleasure of one who was then an invalid. In her name I wrote Mr. Roe a note of thanks for the flowers, and I received from him a characteristic reply. He wrote:—

"'. . . I was delighted that my hastily gathered apple-blossoms gave such pleasure to your wife. How little it costs to bestow a bit of brightness here and there, if we only think about doing it!'

"The Authors' Club was invited by Mr. and Mrs. Roe to spend Saturday, the 16th of June, at their home near Cornwall-on-Hudson, where we were cordially promised a feast of strawberries and pleasant outdoor pastimes. The day was a perfect, a happy, and a memorable one to all who accepted the hospitality of the novelist. He met us at the river landing with a hearty hand-shake and a word of welcome for each guest, and personally conducted us to carriages which had been provided to convey us to his farmhouse, which we soon found to be an ideal home of unpretentious elegance. At luncheon our host addressed us, begging us to lay aside all

formality, and get all the pleasure possible from his fruits and flowers, green grass and cooling shade. The strawberries in his patch were enormous, and each visitor to the vines in turn found Roe at his side, parting the leaves for him, and showing him where to pick the finest specimens. He was ubiquitous that day. If one strolled off among the myriad roses, and stopped to pluck a bud, he found the shapely hand of the farmer-author pulling for him a more beautiful one. If you flung yourself on the grass to dream awhile, Roe was lying down by you, telling you how happy this union of friends made him feel.

"The day wore on to sunset, when a dance, to the music of banjos, was improvised on the lawn, the banjos being played by some handsome youths in lawn-tennis attire, who, with their gayly beribboned instruments, made a pretty scene. Roe clapped his hands with delight as he moved from group to group. I heard him say, 'How often will I recall this scene! I can bring you all back here just as you are now, whenever I want to.' His wife and daughters were unceasing in gracious attentions to their guests.

"When the time for parting arrived, and the carriages were drawn up, Mr. Roe hurried from one to another of us, begging each and all not to go, assuring us of ample accommodation if we would stay over night. A few remained, and those who left did so reluctantly, some of them, I am sure, quite sorrowfully. I remember wondering at myself for being overcome by such a feeling of sadness as I waved the family a last farewell from the departing carriage. I had said good-by to the famous writer as we came down the broad steps of his vine-covered veranda, he with his arm about my waist.

"Never lived a more lovable and kindlier man than E. P. Roe; and when, soon after that golden day, I read one morning of his sudden death, my heart welled up with tears over the bereavement of that stricken household in the shadow of old Storm King; yet I felt that their grief must be illumined by the pure light that hallowed the name 'of him who uttered nothing base.'

ELROD BURKE."

"I fancy there are few of those active, tireless Americans, who, nevertheless, steal time from their business to read many newspapers and many books, who have heard of an association of men in New York called the Authors' Club. Authors, in their eyes, are apt to seem like inhabitants of a world apart, a world separated by a broad boundary from the sphere of average commercial labor. Authors are, as it were, abstractions; they are heard and not seen. They are heard through their books, which are the concrete essence of themselves; yet the author is, after all, an extremely concrete personage, who strives as hard as anyone for his living, and whose reward is seldom commensurate with his efforts. It is the exceptional great man of literature—the great author being a better illustration than the small one—who is lucky enough to enjoy felicity during his lifetime.

"But I did not start out here to make the old argument—which has been so often a fanciful and sentimental argument—against literature as a remunerative profession. My idea was a simple one: To assume that authors are more generally hidden from public view than almost any other class of men, and that, for this reason especially, the least important bit of gossip touching the private doings, goings and sayings of authors interests, without question, a very large number of people. The writer of a famous novel or poem may walk the length of Broadway, yet remain absolutely a stranger to the crowd among whom he walks. A nobody of a politician passing over the same space would, I am sure, be liberally recognized as a somebody, and not the least sort of a somebody by any means. The stranger to the crowd, however, the author, derives practical benefit from the 'charm of mystery.' To be at once celebrated and unknown is for him a desirable condition. His books are read. He piques curiosity. What more could he ask for?

"The Authors' Club, being merely an association of authors, is therefore somewhat outside of public view. Its peculiar distinction is that it brings together various men whom the world honors, and a few more whom the world may or

may not learn to honor. It is a very modest little Club, possibly with a very large future before it. If I should praise it for one thing heartily, that would be the good fellowship which animates it and which has permitted it to thrive. Among the older members of the club—the members who actually possess reputation—are Stoddard, Stedman, Curtis, Edward Eggleston, John Hay, M. D. Conway, Mark Twain, George H. Boker, Henry Drisler, E. P. Roe, Andrew Carnegie, Henry James, E. L. Godkin, Parke Godwin, S. Weir Mitchell, Noah Brooks, and (in an honorary sense) J. R. Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, R. L. Stevenson and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The younger members count such names as Gilder, Lathrop, Bunner, Boyesen, Bishop, Luska, Will Carleton, Rutton, Matthews, McMaster, Miller, Bronson Howard, Mabie, DeKay, Boyle O'Reilly, Thorndike Rice, and others hardly less well known. Of all the men whom I just mentioned none has a wider reading public than Edward P. Roe, some of whose books have passed through twenty or more editions.

"Mr. Roe is one of those authors 'who make money,' whose writing is not thrown on the barren soil of neglect. His income from books is much ampler, I believe, than the income of any other man of letters, obtained from the same source, in America. Because he is so popular he does not necessarily possess the elements of greatness. True greatness seldom 'makes money.' Even brilliant originality in literature has a comparatively small audience. This is the line of logic, since the finest writing appeals only to the finest minds, and the latter are stray blossomings in an oasis of respectability. It is not, in the circumstances, difficult to explain Mr. Roe's popularity. He tells a pleasant story with unaffected simplicity; he is always on the side of conservative feeling; he is eager to help men and women, as well as to amuse them; he is, in short, the most earnest and effective representative of a numerous 'home gathering' that is now writing in this country. Why, then, should he not be popular? The bold or merely erratic genius of distinctly literary

writers might not be appreciated or comprehended by Mr. Roe's public. Even so aggressive a person as that turbulent and pyrotechnic Frenchman, Guy de Maupassant, attacks criticism in a way which should be a lesson to Mr. Roe's least generous critics. Without any kind of preconception or theory M. Maupassant says: 'A critic should understand, distinguish, and explain the most opposite tendencies, the most contrary temperaments, and admit the most adverse researches of art.' On such a broad basis of criticism every admissible popularity may be fairly accounted for.

"Mr. Roe, the man, is an exact counterpart, one may say, of Mr. Roe, the author. As an author, in the first place, he is remarkably candid. He has been so candid, indeed, that the tendency of certain critics to treat him disingenuously is rather absurd. These critics want him to write books, apparently, which he does not propose to write; they overlook the fact that Mr. Roe has stated very clearly just what he desires to write. In a preface to one of his novels he says, in effect, that if his books are not beautiful works of art they are at least books which tender peace and resignation to many lives. (I am not quoting, by the way, but am presenting the idea which must have been in Mr. Roe's mind when he wrote that preface.) There are so many clever books published nowadays which pervert the young and sensitive conscience—a word not included in the vocabulary of our 'disagreeably' artistic novelists—that it may be wise to accept Mr. Roe's novels as good morality, if not as the best literature.

"It is not every author who puts himself into his books. Drunkards have written temperance tracts. Blackguards have written treatises on ideal existence. Posing fops have railed against the hardships which beset noble ambition. Mr. Roe has written the best that is in him for the best that is in thousands of men and women. I have tried to indicate briefly what he is as an author. As a man, he is not less genial, sincere, and agreeable than his books. The cleverest authors are, as a rule, far more entertaining and astonishing in their books than in themselves. In themselves, to speak

the truth, they are not likely to be either entertaining or astonishing. I should look to few of them as acceptable hosts. Mr. Roe proved himself, and proved how good a host he was, on a recent Saturday afternoon, when some thirty or forty members of the Authors' Club accepted his invitation to spend a day at his house and grounds on the historic heights of Cornwall.

"Nearly all those who accepted Mr. Roe's invitation travelled to Cornwall by water. And they were not a bad lot, taking them together. There was E. C. Stedman, for example the most popular writer among writers, the youngest man, by all odds, for his age—fuller of the exhilaration of youth than most of his juniors by twenty years; C. C. Buel, associate editor of the 'Century,' who will soon marry Miss Isom, an adopted daughter (if I am not mistaken) of 'John Paul,' otherwise known as Mr. Webb; Mr. Webb himself, wearing that contentedly placid air which he never seems to shake off, and always on time with a good story or joke; A. J. Conant, whose yarns are famous, and whose tall form swayed benignly under a huge slouch hat; Hamilton W. Mabie, the youthful and smiling editor of the 'Christian Union'; W. L. Alden, one of the few men who can speak with authority on the acting of Burton; Theodore L. De Vinne, recently returned from Europe, where he had vast trouble in keeping warm; W. H. Bishop, who has got beyond the 'promising' stage in novel writing and who will spend his summer in France; Henry Harland ('Sidney Luska'), as cheerful as his stories are sombre—just the sort of personality that does not repeat itself in literature; Raymond S. Perrin, who is kind enough to save some of his friends from disaster by presenting his first published book—price $5—to them; W. S. Walsh, close shaven as a priest, and editor of 'Lippincott's'; Noah Brooks, once upon a time presiding genius of the Lotus Club, and the author of several charming books for boys; Edward Carey, associate editor of the New York 'Times'; Leonard Kip, Albert Matthews, John H. Boner, R. R. Bowker, and several representatives of the 'Century's' staff.

"When this crowd of writers—numbering about thirty in all—reached Mr. Roe's home, they found Richard Henry Stoddard and Julian Hawthorne installed there. Mr. Stoddard may now be classed properly among our 'venerable' poets, although he enjoys excellent health and gets through an immense amount of work. Hawthorne, in a flannel shirt, with a soft red tennis cap on his handsome head, was by far the most picturesque figure of the group. As to the host, Mr. Roe, he is a man of somewhat striking presence. He is of medium height, strongly built, with a gravely pleasant and intelligent face; his dark hair is brushed off a high forehead, his beard and mustache are long and black; he has kindly gray eyes, and his manner is that of a man who has spent the greater part of his life in the atmosphere of home. To do good, to help others—that appears to be his earnest ambition. The notes of religion and morality dominate the note of literature in him. In fact, he is much less an author than a teacher. Once he preached from the church pulpit, now he preaches through his books, and he finds the latter method far more profitable, at least, than the former.

"Mr. Roe does not confine himself, however, to the making of such books as please the great Philistine class. He is an authority on the cultivation of small fruits and flowers. What he has written upon this interesting subject possesses scientific value. Upon his grounds at Cornwall he raises some beautiful specimens of the rose, and strawberries as large and luscious as any found in New Jersey soil during June. The day selected for the authors' visit to Cornwall happened to be at the height of the strawberry season, and the manner in which these usually sedate persons made their way to Mr. Roe's strawberry bushes immediately after greeting their host reminded one of the skirmishing of boys in a melon patch. The berries, many of them with the circumference of a young tomato, were dug remorselessly from their cool shadows, while a particularly hot sun poured down upon the backs of thirty perspiring authors. But the fruit was worthy of the effort used in plucking it, for Mr. Roe has

brought strawberry culture to a rare state of perfection. His berries, whether large or small, have a singularly sweet and delicate flavor; they are richly colored, and their meat is as firm as that of a ripe peach.

"Mr. Roe's grounds are quite spacious, and lie directly under the shade of Storm King. They are included in the plateau of a hill, and the scenery round about—especially in the direction of the Hudson—is wonderfully varied and picturesque. Mr. Roe's father and grandfather resided at Cornwall, and now a fourth generation of the family is identified with this lovely bit of country. The house occupied by the novelist is not the one built by his ancestors. It is a plain, old-fashioned structure, built as every similar structure should be—with a broad, breezy hall running from end to end, thus dividing the lower part of the house into two comfortable compartments. The various rooms—and there are plenty of them—are neatly but not pretentiously furnished, books and pictures being their chief ornaments. On the top floor Mr. Roe has his workshop—a long, narrow, uncarpeted room, under a slanting roof, well ventilated, and filled with lazy lounges and chairs, common book-shelves, a large writing-desk, and a cabinet containing specimens of Hudson River birds. Mr. Roe's latest hobby is to collect birds and to study their songs. He stuffs the birds and jots down in a note-book brief comments upon their songs. He is endeavoring, especially, to make an exact list of the time—to the fraction of a second—at which each bird begins to sing in the early dawn. 'I like to get my facts from nature,' he said to me, 'not from other men's books.'

"Mr. Roe is one of the most hospitable of men, a fact which his thirty author-friends would have discovered if they had not known that it was a fact. A day seldom goes by that does not bring him a visitor who receives a royal welcome; a night seldom passes that does not find occupants for his spare rooms. Whoever takes the trouble to call upon him he is glad enough to see. If his half-million readers could call upon him simultaneously they would be led cheerfully to the

strawberry patch. Authors may thrive on the stones of a city because they must; but the ideal home for an author is that of E. P. Roe at Cornwall.

"George Edgar Montgomery."

"It was on one of the most delightful days of last month that Mr. Roe received in an informal way at his hillside home his fellow-craftsmen of the Authors' Club of New York.

"A rambling old house placed back from the road and perched upon one of the many hilltops that rise from the river in that most picturesque section known as the Highlands of the Hudson, Mr. Roe's home had about it that air of comfort and serenity that one would naturally imagine as the most appropriate surroundings for the author of 'Nature's Serial Story.'

"Mr. Roe was so peculiarly a companionable man that his friends were legion, and among the busy workers who constitute the Authors' Club none were more popular than he—the busiest worker of them all.

"He met us at the landing, his genial face speaking a welcome even before his voice was heard, and 'Roe! Roe! Roe!' came the greeting from his expectant guests ere they filed off the boat. He saw that we were all comfortably bestowed in the numerous carriages that he had in waiting, led the procession up the steep road that climbed the Cornwall hills, and standing at the foot of his veranda steps, welcomed each visitor who 'lighted down' with his cheery smile and his cordial hand-clasp. He turned us loose in his strawberry bed—that pet domain of one who had so practically shown how it was possible to achieve 'Success with Small Fruits;' he loaded us with roses—dear also to one who lived as he did 'Near to Nature's Heart;' and then with brief words of hospitality that were alive, hearty and inspiring, he bade us make free with his house and home for the day. That we enjoyed it, every action testified. Released from care and labor for a day, surrounded by all the attractions that make a June day

E. P. ROE AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH.

among the Highlands doubly delightful, and made so cordially to feel ourselves at home, enjoyment was easy, and the day was one to be marked with a red letter by all whose good fortune it was to have been one of that merry party.

"Mr. Roe's Cornwall home showed the lover of Nature and of his chosen profession. 'This has been your inspiration here, has it not?' I asked. 'Yes,' he replied, with a loving glance at the quiet country landscape that we overlooked from the broad veranda; 'here and hereabout I have got very much of my material. I love it all.'

"The comfortable rooms of that quaint, old-fashioned house had many a touch that showed the affection for his surroundings.

" 'Well, Roe,' said Stedman, ever ready with his apt quotations, 'this castle hath a pleasant seat,' and he said truly. The homelike house, the thrifty farm-lands, the verdant patches filled with fruits and flowers, and the green growths of the kitchen garden bespoke the man who added to the gentleman-farmer the practical student of the helpful products of the earth.

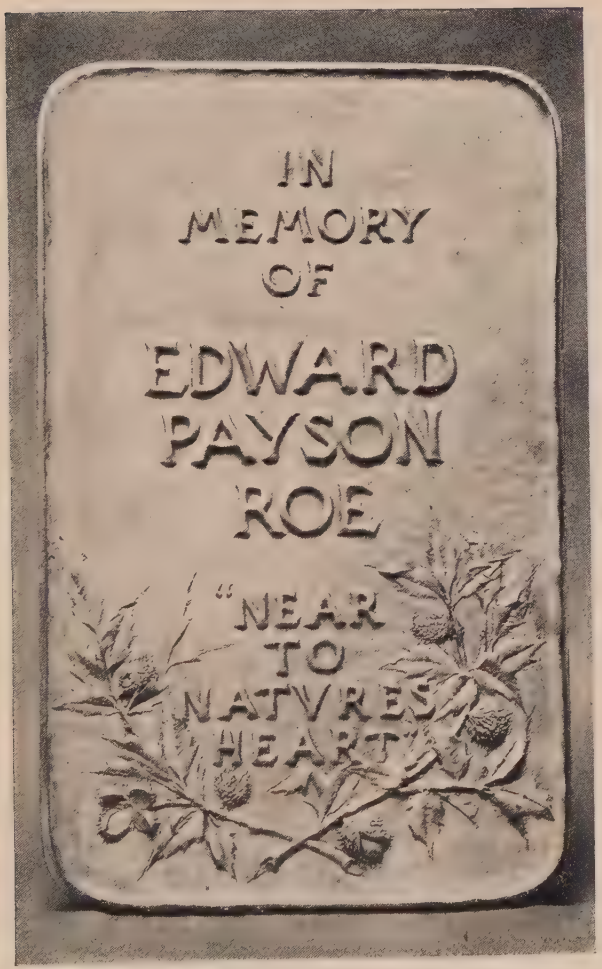
" 'Down there,' he said, indicating one portion of his land, 'I have planted twenty-five varieties of peas. I wish to test them, to study their quality and discover which are the best for the producer to raise and which have the best flavor. I like to make these experiments.'

"A bountiful spread for the sharpened appetites of those who found in that flower-laden air an increase of desire awaited us in the cool dining and reception rooms—thrown into one to comfortably seat so large a company—and it was a question who enjoyed it most, guests or host, for his kindly attentions and his invitation to eat and spare not gave an extra sauce to the good things offered us. An after-dinner ride through the charming country thereabout, so many sections of which had been written into his characteristic stories; a siesta-like reunion beneath the shade of the trees that dotted his ample lawn and almost embowered his home; an oft-repeated desire that we should not go city-ward until 'the last

train;' a quiet chat as this most delightful of hosts passed from group to group; the zest with which the pleasant-faced wife and the son and daughter of our host seemed to enter into his and our enjoyment of the day—these, and the many minor details of a June day's outing among the historic Highlands that may not find expression here, gave to us all an experience that no one among us would have missed, and which each one of us will recall with peculiar and tender memories now that the good man who made them possible to us has dropped his unfinished work and left us so suddenly and so unexpectedly. . . . . ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS."'

Of the many tributes to my brother's memory I shall here quote but two. The first is from Julian Hawthorne and is addressed to the Editors of the "Critic;" the second is the resolution of sympathy sent to Mrs. Roe by the members of the Authors' Club.

"You will probably be asked to find room in your columns for many letters from the friends of E. P. Roe. I apply for admission with the others, on the ground that none of them could have loved him more than I did. The telegram which to-day told me of his death has made my own life less interesting to me. He was so good a man that no one can take his place with those who knew him. It is the simple truth that he cared for his friends more than for himself; that his greatest happiness was to see others happy; that he would have more rejoiced in the literary fame of one of his friends than in any such fame of his own winning. All his leisure was spent in making plans for the pleasure and profit of other people. I have seen him laugh with delight at the success of these plans. As I write, so many generous, sweet, noble deeds of his throng in my memory—deeds done so unobtrusively, delicately and heartily—that I feel the uselessness of trying to express his value and our loss. He was at once manly and childlike: manly in honor, truth and tenderness; childlike in the simplicity that suspects no guile and practices none. He had in him that rare quality of loving sympa-



TABLET ON BOULDER IN "ROE PARK."

thy that prompted sinners to bring their confessions to him, and ask help and counsel of him—which he gave, and human love into the bargain. Among his million readers, thousands wrote to thank him for good that his books had awakened in their souls and stimulated in their lives. He knew the human heart, his own was so human and so great; and the vast success of his stories, however technical critics may have questioned it, was within his deserts, because it was based on this fact. No one could have had a humbler opinion of Roe's 'art' than he had: but an author who believes that good is stronger than evil, and that a sinner may turn from his wickedness and live, and who embodies these convictions in his stories, without a trace of cant or taint of insincerity—such an author and man deserves a success infinitely wider and more permanent than that of the skilfulest literary mechanic: and it is to the credit of our nation that he has it."

Authors' Club, 19 West 24th Street, New York.
January 19, 1889.

Mrs. E. P. Roe.

Dear Madam—I am instructed by the General Meeting of the Authors' Club to communicate to you the following minute of a resolution that was then adopted. It runs as follows:—

"On motion of Mr. E. C. Stedman it is unanimously resolved that by the death of Mr. E. P. Roe this club has lost a member who was endeared to his fellow-members by more than ordinary ties. His kindly disposition and charm of conversation and manner, his wide charity, made him an always welcome companion, and though circumstances did not admit of his frequent attendance at its meetings, his constant interest in the club was evinced by numerous attentions which showed that he was present in spirit if not in person.

"This club recalls with a sense of sorrowful satisfaction that the last act of the late Mr. Roe in connection with the club was the generous entertainment of its members by himself and his wife, a few weeks before his death, at his home

at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, an event which will ever dwell in the grateful remembrance of those who were present on the occasion, and in scarcely a less degree of those members who were unable to avail themselves of the privilege.

"At its Annual Meeting this club desires to assure Mrs. Roe and the members of her family of its sincere sympathy with her in the bereavement which she has sustained, to convey to her its grateful acknowledgment of the abundant hospitality she exercised toward the club on the occasion of its visit to her home last June, and to thank her for her generous gift of an admirable portrait of her late husband."

I have the honor to be, Madam, with great respect,

Your faithful servant,

A. B. Starey,

Secretary Authors' Club.

CHAPTER XIV

AN ACCOUNT OF E. P. ROE'S BOOKS

A FEW more pages will be given to an account of the circumstances under which my brother's books were written, including mention of some incidents which suggested the stories.

His first novel was "Barriers Burned Away." Speaking of this venture he said at one time:—"I did not take up the writing of fiction as a means of livelihood, nor to gratify ambition. When I heard the news of the great fire in Chicago I had a passionate desire to see its houseless, homeless condition, and spent several days among the ruins and people, who found refuge wherever they could. I wandered around night and day, taking notes of all I saw, and there the plot of my story was vaguely formed."

When Edward had written about eight chapters of this book, as has been said, he read them to Dr. Field and his associate editor, Mr. J. H. Dey. He would not have been greatly surprised had they advised his throwing the manuscript into the burning grate before them, but, instead, they requested him to leave it with them for serial publication in the "Evangelist."

In the intervals of his busy life at Highland Falls the story grew into fifty-two chapters. He wrote when and where he could—on steamboats and trains as well as in his study—the manuscript often being only a few pages ahead of its publication. His characters took full possession of his imagination and were very real to him.

The serial continued for a year. The next thing was to secure a publisher for the book. Mr. Dodd, senior member

of the firm of Dodd, Mead, and Company, said once when questioned in reference to this subject:—"Mr. Roe brought his manuscript to us one day. We read it and made him an offer. At that time we looked upon the venture as purely experimental. Mr. Roe accepted our offer, and we announced the book. In a short time letters began to pour in upon us from people who had seen our announcement, and had also read as much of the story as had appeared in the 'Evangelist,' asking when the book would be published. These letters were the first indication we had of the story's popularity, but they were very good evidence of it. An edition was issued; the book sold rapidly, and the sale since has been large and continuous."

"How about your original contract with Mr. Roe?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Dodd, "the original contract was destroyed and another made on a different basis by which Mr. Roe is largely the gainer. From that time we have published everything that he has written, and our relations have always been very pleasant and close."

"What is his most popular work?"

" 'Barriers Burned Away' has had the largest sale. 'Without a Home' stands second on the list, and, considering the fact that it was published ten years later, is most popular. 'Opening a Chestnut Burr' comes next; 'Near to Nature's Heart' has had a very large sale, and the others follow closely. There is not one of his novels that has not had a wide circulation."

"Have you any idea of the extent to which his books have been sold abroad?"

"All have been published in England and the colonies. Mr. Roe has in almost every instance arranged with English publishers for an authorized edition from advance sheets, and received compensation. His stories are also translated into German and French."

"Barriers" was first published in 1872. It is reverently dedicated to the memory of the author's mother, and his own

words as to how it came to be written have already been quoted. Many letters were received from young men acknowledging the helpfulness of this book.

"Play and Profit in My Garden" was Edward's first book on horticulture. It was written in 1873 at Highland Falls, and was published serially in the "Christian Union," then edited by Dr. Lyman Abbott. Reviewing the book just two years before his death, he claimed that he put into it more of his personality than into any of his other works.

It is a garden story of his own experience. The sandy knoll around the little country parsonage, upon which grew only a vine or two, a few cherry trees and some common currant bushes, served as a beginning in this gardening venture. To that was added a small tract of adjoining land which was rented from a neighbor, making but two acres in all, yet the profits from this ground for one season alone amounted to two thousand dollars.

In this book he tells how his garden was stocked at first with plants from the old home place, and how they brought back the sweet associations of his childhood. He speaks, too, of his pleasure in selecting new varieties for trial from the gorgeously illustrated catalogues that he received.

"What Can She Do?" was written the same year. Since that time numberless women have learned through the fortunes or misfortunes of life to solve this problem for themselves, but this book has found a place in many homes and by its influence has led young girls to be more helpful in the family circle as well as in the wider social spheres in which they move.

"Opening a Chestnut Burr" (1874) suggested itself to Edward's mind while taking a walk one autumn along a wood-road on the grounds of the old homestead. Several of the characters are drawn from life, representing some eccentric people who lived near us in our childhood. In a "well-meanin'" man, "Daddy Inggar," we have a perfect picture of an old neighbor whom we children called "Daddy Liscomb." He lived in a little house opposite one of our

father's apple orchards, and no watch-dog could have been more faithful than was this old man in guarding our fruit from the depredations of factory boys. He was very profane, more in his last years from habit, however, than from intentional irreverence, and sometimes when the Methodist clergyman was offering prayer in his home a sudden twinge of rheumatism would call forth a perfect volley of oaths, for which he would immediately afterward make most humble apologies. This book Edward dedicated to his wife.

"From Jest to Earnest" (1875) is dedicated to Edward's schoolmate and college friend, Rev. A. Moss Merwin. The story is nearly altogether imaginary, but was suggested by an actual house-party and the position of a clever hostess who was embarrassed by the necessity for making the best of an unwelcome guest.

"Near to Nature's Heart" was written at Cornwall and published in 1876—the Centennial year. It is a Revolutionary story, and the scene is laid near West Point. "Captain Molly" is of course historical, as is also the Robin Hood of the Highlands, "Claudius Smith." But most of the incidents of the story, as well as the leading characters, are imaginary.

A few years ago I met at a seashore resort in Massachusetts a cultured gentleman who held a high position in an educational institution in that State. He told me that his only child, Vera, was named from the heroine of "Near to Nature's Heart." He had read all of my brother's books, but particularly enjoyed this one. And while in California making a trip to some of the high mountain passes of the State I met a young couple living in a lonely canyon, miles from any town, whose year-old baby was called Amy, in honor, they said, of the heroine of "Nature's Serial Story." They had no knowledge of my relationship to the author of the book.

"A Knight of the Nineteenth Century" (1877) was reverently dedicated to the memory of the writer's father. These lines form the preface:—

"He best deserves a knightly crest
Who slays the evils that infest
His soul within. If victor here,
He soon will find a wider sphere.
The world is cold to him who pleads;
The world bows low to knightly deeds."

Soon after this book was offered for sale upon the railroad trains, a young man, who had tired of the humdrum duties of his home, started West to seek adventure in the excitements of mining life. He bought a copy, read it, and was so impressed by the writer's picture of true knightly deeds that he abandoned his purpose and returned to take up the obligations he had cast aside.

"A Face Illumined" (1878). A beautiful, but discordant, face once seen at a concert-garden suggested the title and plot of this book. It interested Edward to imagine what such a countenance could express under the ennobling influence of a pure Christian life. He says in his preface:—"The old garden and the aged man who grew young in it are not creations, but sacred memories." It was our father who was constantly in the writer's mind as he rehearsed the conversations with Mr. Eltinge, and the enormous silver poplar that shaded the old man's front gate, the tool-house and pear tree, and the brook in which "Ida Mayhew" bathed her tear-stained face, were all drawn from originals.

"Without a Home" (1881). This book was announced two years before it was completed, for my brother studied with great care and patience the problems upon which it touches. He visited scores of tenements and station-houses, and sat day after day upon the bench with police judges. He also talked with many of the proprietors of city stores and with their employees, and his indignation was aroused when he found that in most of these establishments saleswomen were compelled to stand throughout the hot summer days, no provision being made for even an occasional rest. In regard to the victim of the opium habit in this story, he said once, "I felt from the first that Mr. Joselyn was going to ruin and

I could not stop him, and suffered much with him. I also felt the death of his daughter almost as much as if she had been a member of my own family."

"Success with Small Fruits" (1881). "Dedicated to Mr. Charles Downing, a neighbor, friend, and horticulturist from whom I shall esteem it a privilege to learn in coming years, as I have in the past." Chapters from this book, appropriately illustrated, first appeared serially in "Scribner's Magazine." But the larger scope which the book afforded gave Edward opportunity to treat the various topics more in detail. He gives many practical suggestions for the benefit of those who are interested in this subject. Nevertheless, the book is not a mere manual upon the culture of small fruits. It is happily written, and much quiet humor is to be found in its pages. To quote a brief example:—"In April the bees will prove to you that honey may be gathered even from a gooseberry bush. Indeed, gooseberries are like some ladies that we all know. In their young and blossoming days they are sweet and pink-hued, and then they grow acid, pale, and hard; but in the ripening experience of later life they become sweet again. Before they drop from their places the bees come back for honey, and find it."

Whatever may be the opinion of critics in regard to my brother's fiction, his works on horticulture are of unquestioned authority; they embody the results of carefully tested personal experiments, and for this reason have their value. In this book are given practical directions and advice that gardeners have told me were of immense service to them.

"A Day of Fate" (1880). This is a quiet love-story of a summer sojourn in the Highlands.

"His Sombre Rivals: A Story of the Civil War" (1883). In the preface he says: "The stern and prolonged conflict taught mutual respect. The men of the North were convinced that they fought Americans, and that the people on both sides were sincere and honest."

The Battle of Bull Run is simply a suggested picture, and the other war scenes are colored by the writer's own

reminiscences; but concerning all technical details he consulted military men.

"A Young Girl's Wooing" (1884). Another short love-story, with the scene laid in the Catskills, where it was written.

"Nature's Serial Story" was also published in 1884, but Edward had been for several years making studies for it, at each season carefully noting his observations. He was a great lover of birds and knew exactly when each species arrived North in the spring and just when the fall migrations took place. "Song," he says elsewhere, "is the first crop I obtain, and one of the best. The robins know I am a friend of theirs, in spite of their taste for early strawberries and cherries, and when I am at work they are very sociable and familiar. One or two will light on raspberry stakes and sing and twitter almost as incessantly and intelligently as the children in their playhouse under the great oak tree. Yet the robin's first mellow whistle in spring is a clarion call to duty, the opening note of the campaign."

He drew directly from Nature for facts, and the composition of this book gave him genuine pleasure. He says: "My characters may seem shadows to others, but they were real to me. I meet them still in my walks or drives, where in fancy I placed them."

"An Original Belle" (1885). The most dramatic scenes in this book are those connected with the New York Draft Riots. Edward was in the city one day when the riot had reached its height, and personally witnessed many of the incidents described. Portions of the book relating to this time were submitted to the Superintendent of the Metropolitan police force for possible corrections in the statements made.

"Driven Back to Eden." This story for children was published serially in "St. Nicholas," in 1885. It was lovingly dedicated to "Johnnie," his pet name for his youngest daughter. In it my brother takes a family from a narrow city flat in a neighborhood that was respectable, but densely populated, and where the children were forced to spend much

time upon the streets with very undesirable companions, to a simple country home, surrounded by garden, fields, and woods. Here they enjoy the ideal outdoor life—perhaps as near that of the original "Eden" as can be imagined. Edward places these children among the scenes of his own boyhood and writes of experiences that are fictitious only in detail and characters.

"He Fell in Love with His Wife" (1886). A chance item in a newspaper relative to a man who had married in order to secure a competent housekeeper suggested this story, in which the hero tries a similar experiment.

"The Home Acre" (1887) first appeared serially in "Harper's Magazine." It dwells upon the advantages and pleasures of country life, which is particularly recommended for business men as affording rest and diversion of thought after continuous mental strain. Practical hints are given as to the kind of trees to plant and how to plant them, also as to the proper cultivation of vineyards, orchards and the small fruits. He urges the advisability of teaching every boy and girl in the public schools to recognize and protect certain insects, toads, and harmless snakes that are of incalculable value in the culture of plants and fruits because of the warfare they wage against the enemies of vegetable life.

"The Earth Trembled" (1887) was written while at Santa Barbara; but, as in the case of the Chicago fire, Edward went to Charleston before the effects of the earthquake had been removed, and saw the state of the city and its inhabitants for himself. I have been told by people who lived there at the time that my brother's descriptions of the dreadful calamity are very accurate.

"Miss Lou" (1888) was my brother's last book, and was left unfinished by his sudden death. The inscription reads: —"In loving dedication to 'little Miss Lou,' my youngest daughter."

CHAPTER XV

THE TABLET AND MEMORIAL ADDRESS

ON May 30th, Decoration Day of 1894, Edward's family and many of his friends were invited by the citizens of Cornwall-on-the-Hudson to be present at the dedication of a Memorial Park to be known as Roe Park, a wild spot in the rear of his home where he had been accustomed to go for recreation when his day's task was done.

Here a bronze tablet was placed upon one of the huge bowlders upon which he and his friends had often sat and rested after their long rambles.

Two of his friends, who then came from a distance to honor his memory, have since joined him in the higher mansions—Rev. Dr. Teal, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, who began his ministry at Cornwall, and was for twenty years my brother's intimate friend; and Mr. Hamilton Gibson. Both of these men were stricken down suddenly, as was my brother.

I cannot close these reminiscences better than by quoting from Dr. Lyman Abbott's eloquent Memorial Address, given that day upon my brother's work as a writer.

"It is of the latter aspect of his life I wish to speak for a few moments only, in an endeavor to interpret his service to the great American people by his pen through literature. The chief function of the imagination is to enable us to realize actual scenes with which we are not familiar. This is an

important service. It is well that you who live in these quiet and peaceful scenes should know what is the wretchedness of some of your fellow-beings in the slums of New York. It is well that your sympathies should be broadened and deepened, and that you should know the sorrow, the struggle that goes on in those less favored homes. But this is not the only function of the imagination, nor its highest nor most important function. It gives us enjoyment by taking us on its wings and flying with us away from lives which otherwise would be prosaic, dull, commonplace, lives of dull routine and drudgery. But this also is not the only nor the highest use; God has given us imagination in order that we may have noble ideals set before us, and yet ideals so linked to actual life that they shall become inseparable. He has given us imagination that we may see what we may hope for, what we may endeavor to achieve—that we may be imbued with a nobler inspiration, a higher hope, and a more loving, enduring patience and perseverance. Realism, which uses imagination only to depict the actual, is not the highest form of fiction. Romanticism, which uses the imagination only to depict what is for us the unreal and impossible, is not the highest form of fiction. That fiction is the highest which by the imagination makes real to our thought the common affairs of life, and yet so blends them with noble ideals that we are able to go back into life with a larger, a nobler, and a more perfect faith.

"Now, Mr. Roe's fiction has been very severely criticised, but it has been universally read. For myself I would rather minister to the higher life of ten thousand people than win the plaudits of one self-appointed critic. And his novels have been universally read because they have uniformly ministered to the higher life of the readers. He has ministered to the life not of ten thousand, or of one hundred thousand, but of thousands of thousands, for his readers in this country alone are numbered by the millions. And I venture to say that no man, woman, or child ever read through one of Mr. Roe's books and arose without being bettered by the read-

ing, without having a clearer faith, a brighter hope, and a deeper and richer love for his fellow-man. In one sense he was a realist. He made careful and painstaking study of all the events which he attempted to describe. . . . He was not a mere photographer. He saw the grandeur that there is in life. He felt the heart that beats in a woman's bosom and the heart that beats in a soldier's breast. He felt it because his own heart had known the purity of womanhood and the courage of manhood. He portrayed something of that purity, something of that courage, something of that divine manhood, because he possessed the qualities that made him a hero on the battlefield, and so made him a preacher of heroism in human life. This is the man we have come here to honor to-day; the man who by his imagination linked the real and the ideal together; the man who has enabled thousands of men and women of more prosaic nature than himself to see the beauty and the truth—in one word, the divinity—that there is in human life.

"It is fitting that you should have chosen a rural scene like this as a monument to his name; for he may be described by the title of one of his books, as the one who lived near to nature's heart. He loved these rocks, these hills. It is fitting that you should have left these woods as nature made them. He cared more for the wild bird of the grove than for the caged bird of the parlor, more for the wild flowers than for those of the greenhouse, more for nature wild and rugged than for nature clean and shaven and dressed in the latest fashion of the landscape gardener.

"It is gratifying to see so many of all ages, of all sects, of all classes in this community gather to do honor to the memory of Mr. Roe. But we, many as we are, are not all who are truly here. We stand as the representatives of the many thousands in this country whose hours he has beguiled, whose labors he has lightened, whose lives he has inspired, and in his name and in theirs we dedicate to the memory of Mr. Roe these rocks and trees and this rugged park and this memorial tablet now unveiled. Time with its busy hand will

by and by obscure the writing; time will by and by fell these trees and gnaw away these rocks. Time may even obliterate the name of E. P. Roe from the memory of men; but not eternity itself shall obliterate from the kingdom of God the inspiration to the higher, nobler and diviner life which he—preacher, writer, soldier, pastor and citizen—has left in human life."

THE END